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# *My lady of the fog*

Ralph Henry Barbour

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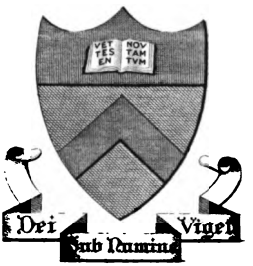


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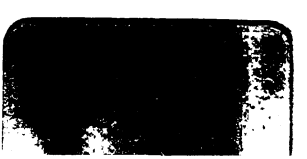

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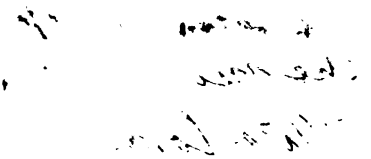

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# MY LADY OF THE FOG

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

KITTY OF THE ROSES

*With illustrations in color by*
FREDERIC J. VON RAPP

AN ORCHARD PRINCESS

*With illustrations in color by*
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

A MAID IN ARCADY

*With illustrations in color by*
FREDERIC J. VON RAPP

HOLLY

*With illustrations in color by*
EDWIN F. BAYHA

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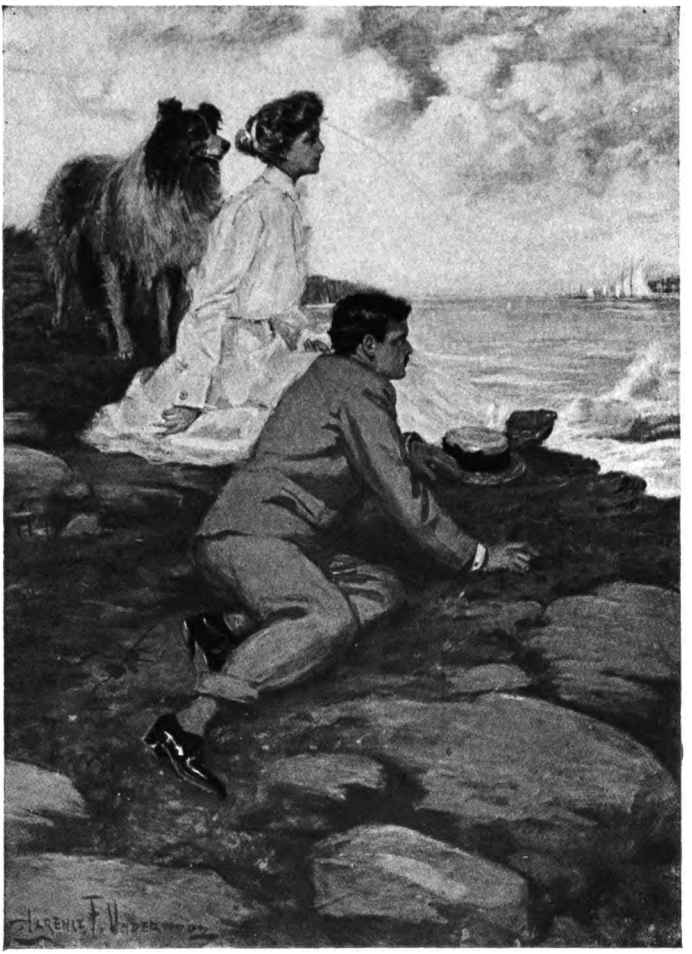

JUDITH FOUND A COMFORTABLE CRANNY AND TOM SPRAWLED HIMSELF AT HER FEET

*Page 134*

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# MY LADY OF THE FOG

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF

"KITTY OF THE ROSES," "AN ORCHARD PRINCESS,"
"A MAID IN ARCADY," "HOLLY," ETC.

*With Twelve Illustrations by*
CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD
*and Decorations by*
EDWARD STRATTON HOLLOWAY

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
1908

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*Philadelphia, U. S. A.*

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To
ESTHER H. BARBOUR

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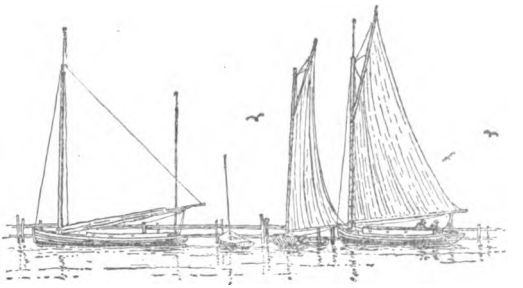

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


PAGE

JUDITH FOUND A COMFORTABLE CRANNY AND TOM SPRAWLED HIMSELF AT HER FEET..... *Frontispiece*

IN ONE HAND WAS A FISHING-LINE ..... 12

SHE NIBBLED THE END OF THE IVORY PEN-HOLDER .... 38

"WHAT I WANT TO DO IS TO STAY RIGHT HERE IN GREENHAVEN AND SEE YOU NOW AND THEN" ..... 73

CAPTAIN GEORGE..... 83

"I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD WALK SO FAR ON AN ISLAND," HE SAID..... 107

THE COSTUME SOMEHOW MADE FOR FORMALITY ..... 150

HALF WAY DOWN THE PATH TO THE LANDING HE ENCOUNTERED A STONE ..... 158

TOM, SHOES IN HAND, FOLLOWED HIM SOFTLY UP THE CREAKING STAIRWAY ..... 169

SO TOM LIGHTED HIS PIPE AND LISTENED TO THE CAPTAIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE FOG OF JULY, '74. .... 178

HE HAD TURNED AND WAS LOOKING HUNGRILY DOWN AT HER BENT HEAD ..... 196

WITH A LITTLE SOB SHE CREPT TOWARD HIM..... 220


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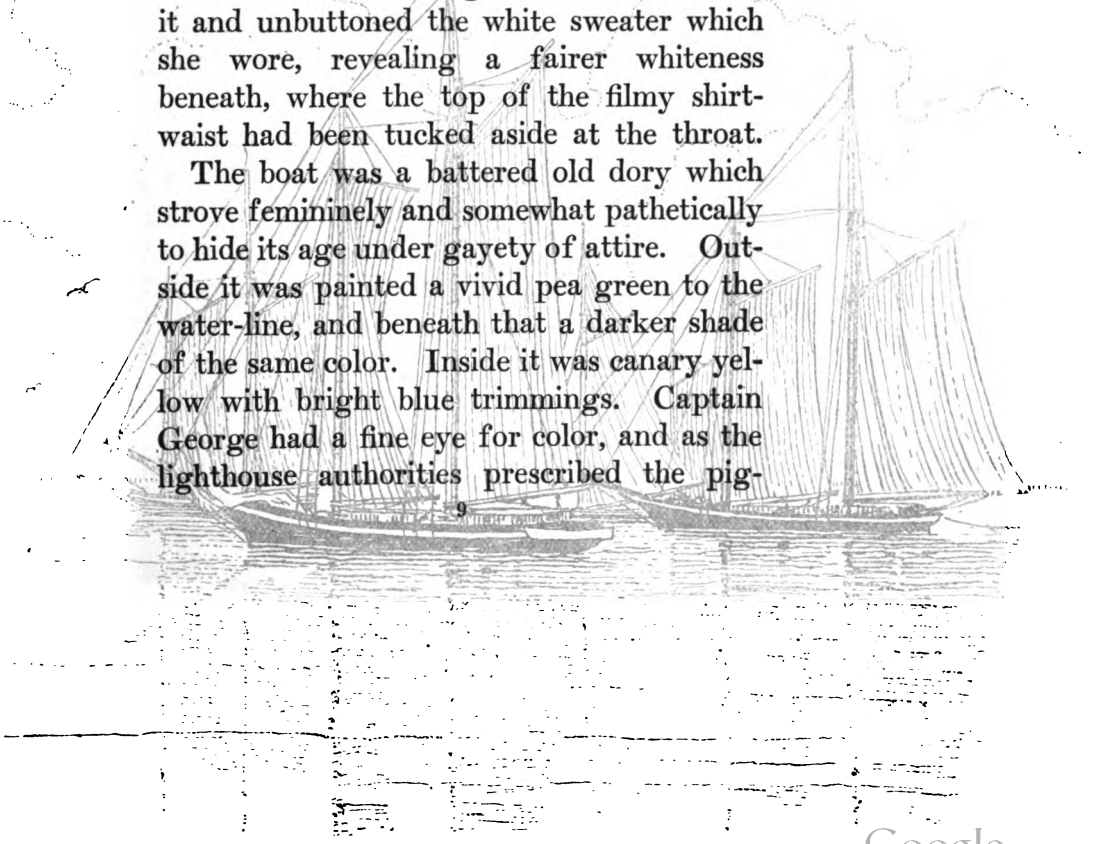
# My Lady of the Fog

## I.

**The fog which, since long before dawn, had lain like a great gray blanket over sea and shore, was thinning. Already its hue had changed as the sun's rays sifted through,** and now its soft grayness had given place to a pale amber. The morning had grown warmer, too, and the girl in the boat noted it and unbuttoned the white sweater which she wore, revealing a fairer whiteness beneath, where the top of the filmy shirt-waist had been tucked aside at the throat.

The boat was a battered old dory which strove femininely and somewhat pathetically to hide its age under gayety of attire. Outside it was painted a vivid pea green to the water-line, and beneath that a darker shade of the same color. Inside it was canary yellow with bright blue trimmings. Captain George had a fine eye for color, and as the lighthouse authorities prescribed the pig-





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ments to be used in the painting of the lighthouse property—limiting the Captain to white and gray—he was therefore forced to give vent to his artistic cravings in other directions, and so each year in early spring the Captain's sailing dory blossomed forth like the Gardens of Araby, a glad, mad riot of color. And with true genius the Captain had craftily added a contrasting note in the crimson bailer which lay in the bottom of the dory. Perhaps had Fate not made Captain George the keeper of Sweetwater Island Light he might have achieved for himself a place of honor amongst the impressionistic painters of the age.

For the sake of congruity the central figure in the picture should have been a weather-beaten old salt in rubber boots, oil-skins and sou'wester. The sou'wester was there, lying discarded on a blue-centered seat, but for the rest, instead of the harmonious mariner, imagine, if you please, a fair-haired girl of twenty with a complexion quite guiltless of tan, and hands too small to reach around the clumsy oars. Picture her



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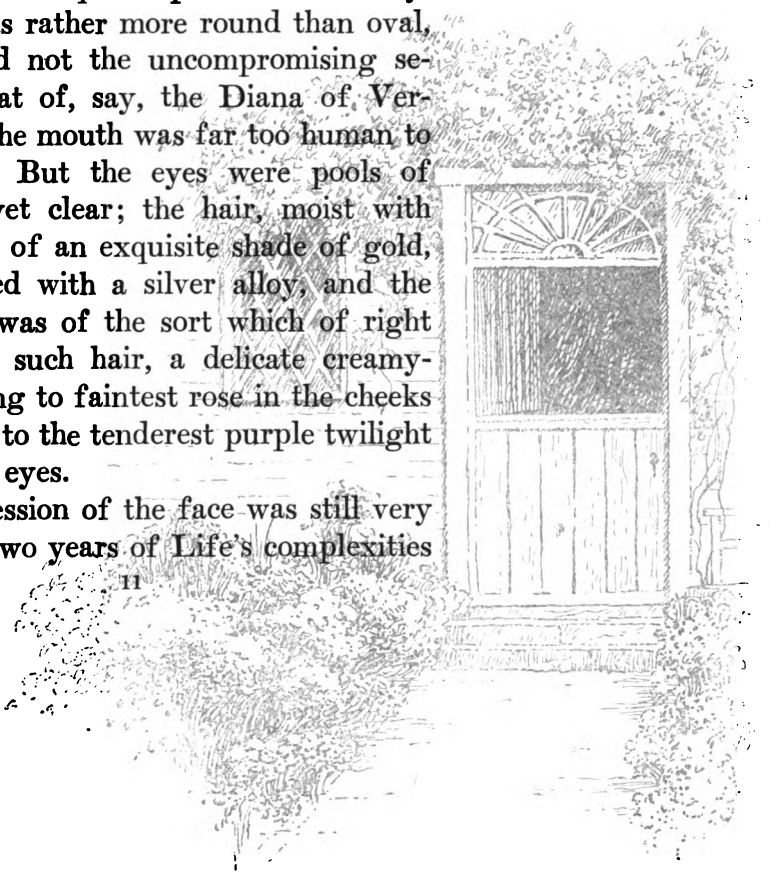
leaning forward as she sat, rounded chin in the pink cup of one hand, her gray-blue eyes peering thoughtfully into the amber haze as though, like a crystal gazer, she saw shapes where no shapes were. I scarcely think you would have called her beautiful; although beauty is largely a matter of personal taste. But I think you would have conceded loveliness, which, as I take it, is something often quite apart from beauty. The face was rather more round than oval, the nose had not the uncompromising severity of that of, say, the Diana of Versailles, and the mouth was far too human to be perfect. But the eyes were pools of light, soft yet clear; the hair, moist with the fog, was of an exquisite shade of gold, of gold paled with a silver alloy, and the complexion was of the sort which of right accompanies such hair, a delicate creamy-white tingeing to faintest rose in the cheeks and shading to the tenderest purple twilight beneath the eyes.

The expression of the face was still very girlish, for two years of Life's complexities





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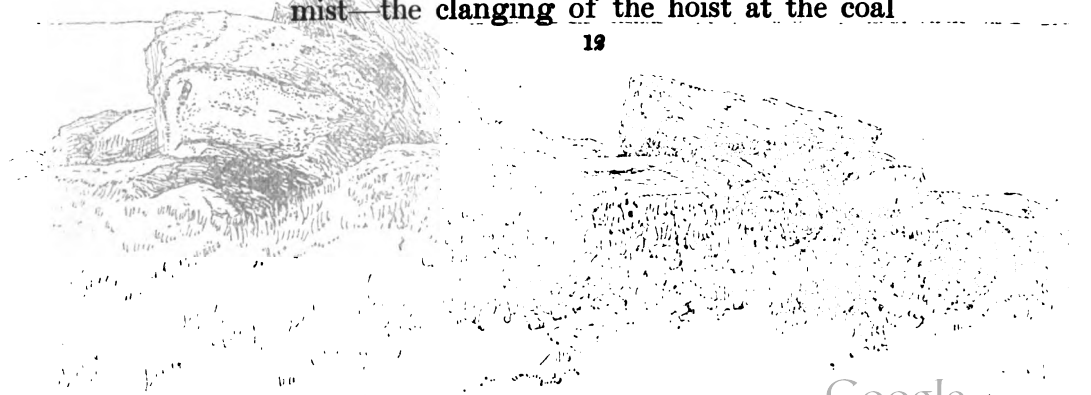
had failed to film the countenance with disillusion. The face looked somewhat grave at this moment, for there was a Problem staring back at it out of the fog, but there was the saving grace of humor in the lines of the mouth. The body, like the face, was still girlish and graceful, a youthful body of delicate lines and tender curves, yet strongly vital.

Such was Judith Sypher in the twentieth year of her life and in the morning of a mid-July day of the year 1906.

She was all in white save for the blue ribbon which she had bound fillet-wise about her hair and for the tan stockings and pumps which sprang in slender effrontery from beneath the up-drawn skirts. In one hand, which rested upon the edge of the dory, was a fishing-line which, with the tin pail of dissected clams under the seat, explained her presence in the boat. Although the fog trimmed down her visible world to a little twenty-foot disk of oily sea, yet there were sounds aplenty from beyond the walls of mist—the clanging of the hoist at the coal





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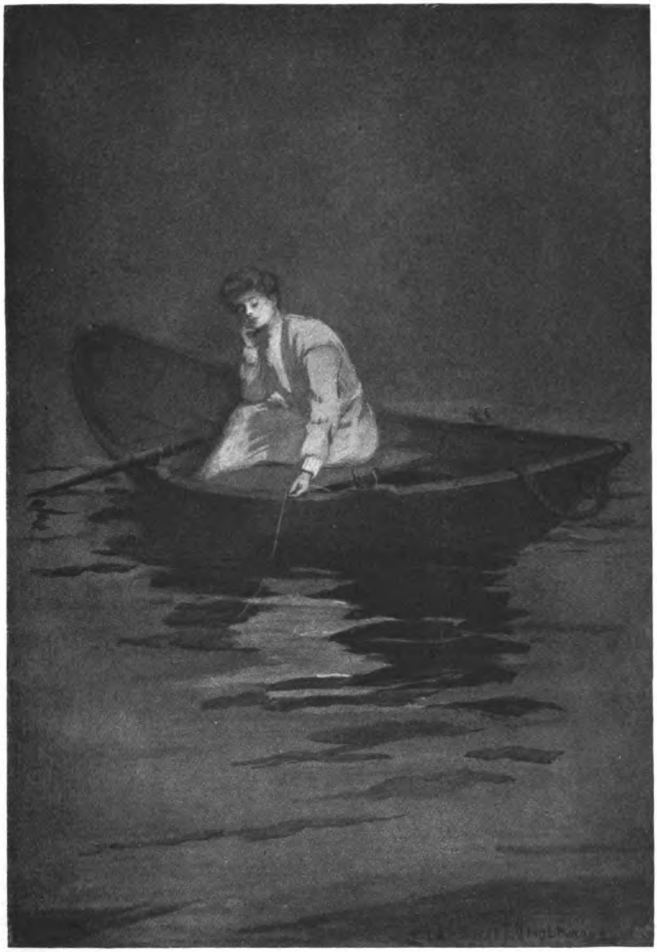

IN ONE HAND WAS A FISHING-LINE

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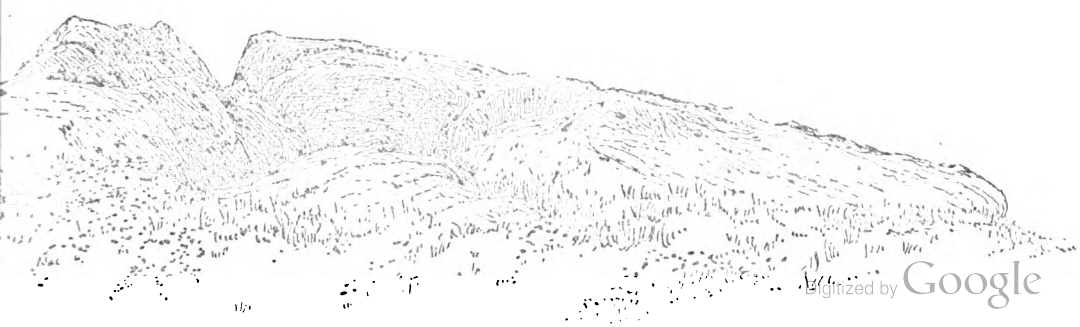
wharf across the harbor, the shrilling of an occasional whistle from launch or tug, the creaking of a boom from some unseen fishing-schooner loitering out to sea, and, friendly and monotonous, the *Ding-dong! Ding-dong!* of the fog-bell at the lighthouse. And so, although there was nothing to be seen, Judith knew quite well where she was. Behind her, across the harbor lay Greenhaven; to the right stood the big summer hotel on its green bluff; to the left was Sweetwater Island, ahead was the open sea. There was no danger of being lost so long as the fog-bell kept up its incessant warning clamor.

And yet, presently, Judith raised her head in slight dismay. The bell was behind her. That meant that the tide had turned and that unless she took to her oars now she would soon have a long and wearisome row back to the island. She had learned to handle oars at college; but those oars were lighter than these, and the boat was lighter than Captain George's dory, and she had no relish for a long struggle against the tide.





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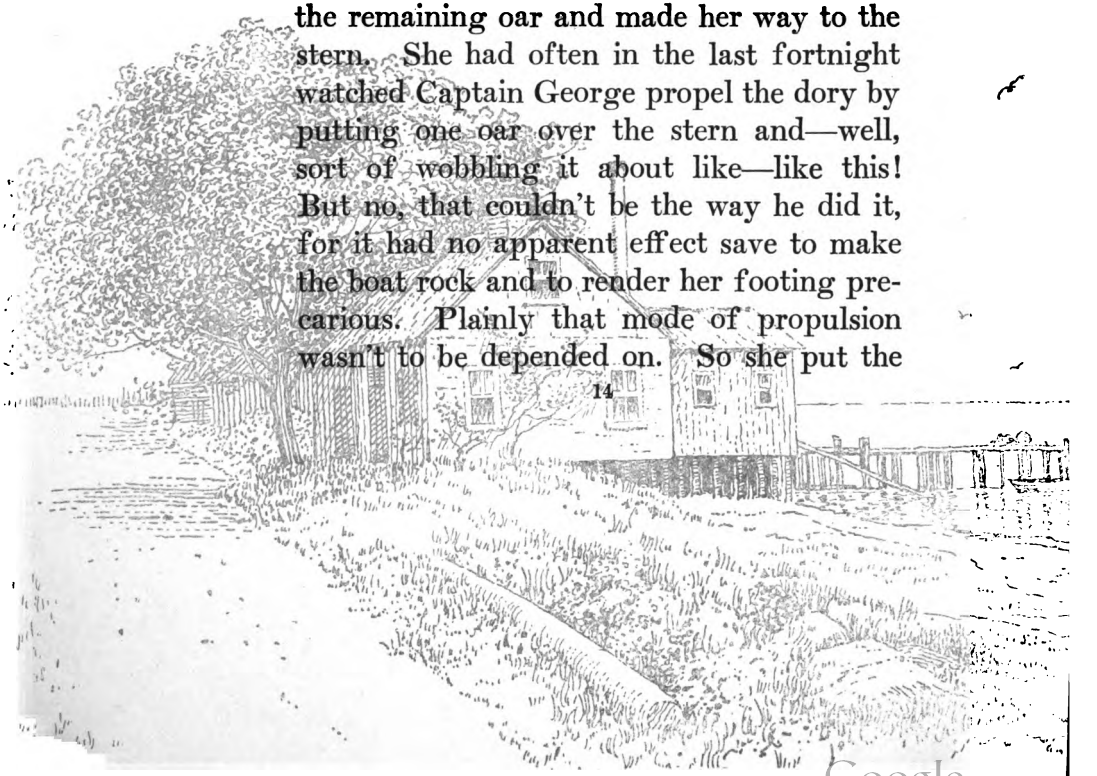
So she fastened the fishing-line to one of the thole-pins and reached for the oars. Her right hand encountered what it sought but her left groped emptily. A swift survey of the dory only increased the expression of dismay on her face. The oar had disappeared. She had left it bobbing lazily between the wooden pegs as well-behaved as you please; she had trusted to its honor and it had failed her! Doubtless it was at this moment floating about somewhere near at hand, bitterly repentant, but there was no comfort in the thought, for, wherever it was, the fog hid it from view.

After a moment of consternation she took the remaining oar and made her way to the stern. She had often in the last fortnight watched Captain George propel the dory by putting one oar over the stern and—well, sort of wobbling it about like—like this! But no, that couldn't be the way he did it, for it had no apparent effect save to make the boat rock and to render her footing precarious. Plainly that mode of propulsion wasn't to be depended on. So she put the





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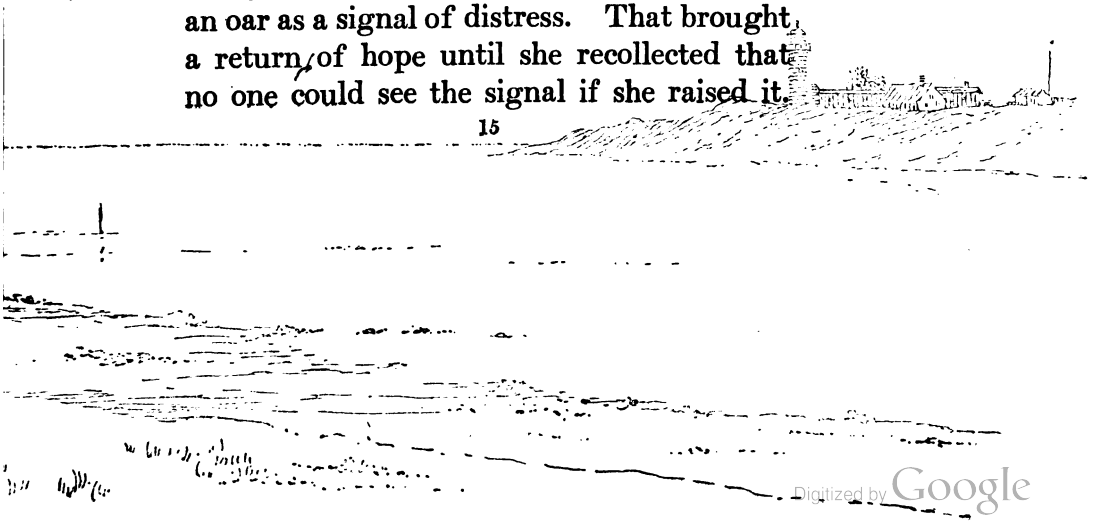
oar over the side, steadied herself, and used it like a paddle. After several strokes she managed to get the dory's nose pointed toward the fog-bell and home, but it was back-breaking work and the dory would persist in swinging off the course. Also, after five minutes or so, she discovered with a sinking heart that the fog-bell was further away than ever and that she was not even discounting the run of the tide!

That knowledge brought a little flurry of panic and she dropped her oar and sank on to the nearest seat. But in a moment she assured herself that there was nothing to fear; that even if she floated past Piper's Reef and the last spar-buoy the fog was undoubtedly burning away and some one would soon see her and come to her rescue. Meanwhile, however, perhaps she had better shout. She did, but nothing came of it. Then she recalled the fact that in novels the heroine always removes her white skirt and ties it to an oar as a signal of distress. That brought a return of hope until she recollected that no one could see the signal if she raised it.





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Then she was rather glad of it, glad that it wasn't necessary to remove her skirt, for the seats were very wet and she was already quite damp enough for comfort. She wished the sun would hurry and come through. Her hair, she was sure, must be a sight, all wet and stringy, and it seemed to her that one rather owed it to oneself to present a respectable appearance when rescued from shipwreck. She tucked back a few rebellious locks, retied the ribbon and felt more cheerful. At all events, she told herself with a little shudder as her eyes fell on the pail of bait, starvation wasn't imminent!

The fog-bell sounded further and further away, and the decorative dory bore her quietly and impassively out to sea through the amber mist. Presently the bell in the tower of the town hall began to ring, faintly yet distinctly. She counted the strokes. Eleven o'clock! She had been out since nine. She wondered when she would get back to her little whitewashed chamber under the lighthouse; wondered whether she ever would; and suddenly felt a little choky and

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miserable. And then, just when the first tear was creeping up, she heard the muffled *pup, pup, pup, pup* of a motor somewhere ahead in the fog. She got to her feet, steadying herself with one hand on the gunwale, and took a deep breath.

"Help!" she shouted, shrilly; "I'm adrift!" That sounded cleverly nautical and she repeated it several times: "I'm adrift! I'm adrift! I'm adrift!" But then, she reflected as she paused to take another breath, being adrift wasn't in itself especially remarkable, and perhaps she had better expend her efforts in a demand for assistance. So she cried, "Help!" again until her breath gave out, and then paused to listen. The sound of the engine had ceased, and although she listened for several long minutes with straining senses she didn't hear it. She sank back to the seat in disappointment only to arise again as a dark object took shape before her in the fog. But it speedily fashioned itself into a great log of wood, painted black, slanting up out of the water. It was the last spar. She watched it pass and only



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when it had disappeared behind her did it occur to her that she might have reached it and made fast the dory to it! She wanted to cry in earnest, then, and would have had not the puffing of the motor-boat suddenly sounded again near at hand. Instantly she was once more on her feet calling for help, and now—it seemed almost too good to be real—a voice called back to her.

"All right!" it said. "Coming to you! Shout again!"

Judith assured herself with a rush of relief that it was absolutely the sweetest voice she had ever heard.

"Here, please! This way!" she called. "I'm—I'm in a dory—adrift!"

"Much obliged," shouted the voice. "I'll find you!"

Judith sat down, smiling tremulously at the idea of her rescuer expressing obligation.

"But it's nice of him to put it that way," she thought. "He must be a gentleman." Then she smiled again. As though it mattered whether he were a gentleman or not so long as he rescued her!



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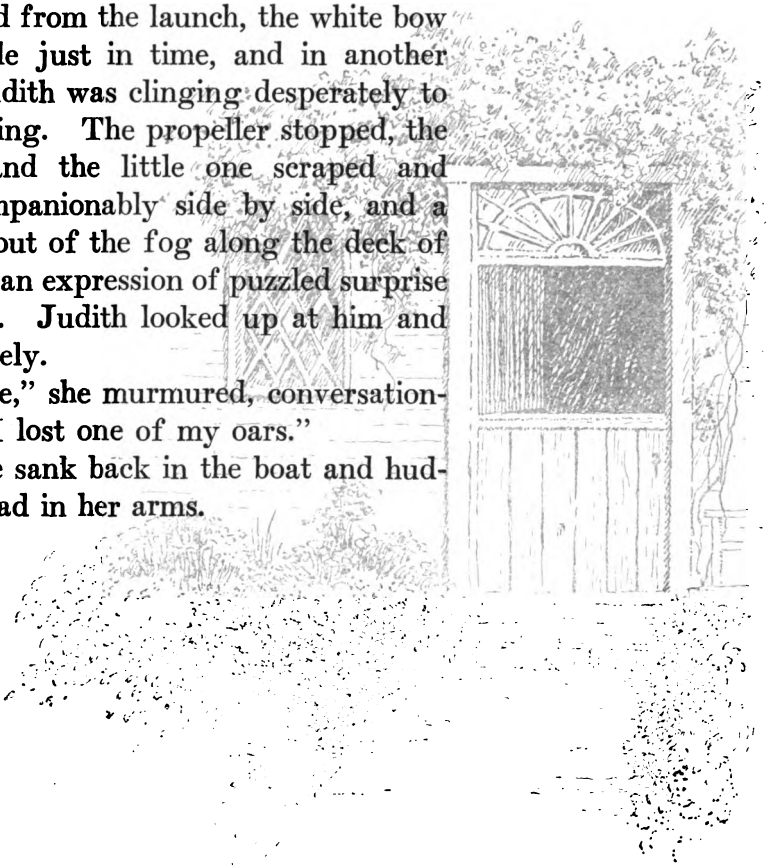
The *pup, pup, pup* of the exhaust drew nearer and nearer while she strained her eyes into the fog ahead. The explosions grew infrequent and querulous and she knew that the rescuer had slowed the engine down. And then she gave a startled cry of warning, for the white bow of a launch cut its way out of the fog and pointed directly at her. She clutched the sides of the dory, certain that it would be run down. But there was a cheery word from the launch, the white bow turned aside just in time, and in another moment Judith was clinging desperately to a brass railing. The propeller stopped, the big boat and the little one scraped and bobbed companionably side by side, and a man came out of the fog along the deck of the launch, an expression of puzzled surprise on his face. Judith looked up at him and smiled bravely.

"You see," she murmured, conversationally, "I—I lost one of my oars."

Then she sank back in the boat and huddled her head in her arms.



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## II.

THE immaculate white launch and the frivolous little dory rubbed shoulders amicably, the engine sizzled and muttered, the lessening fog drifted by in tangled, trailing wraiths of gray and—the man scratched his head. It wasn't a romantic, nor even a picturesque thing to do, but the situation seemed to demand action of some sort and that was the only thing that occurred to him. And, oddly enough, it had the desired effect, for the girl in the dory lifted her head and looked up gravely and containedly. Her eyes were quite dry, or—well, very nearly so.

"I'm not crying," she said, quietly.

"Certainly not," replied Tom Randall, with earnest conviction. There followed a moment of silence during which the girl and the man studied each other quite frankly. Both were pleased with what they saw. The man was twenty-eight years of age, well set-up, broad-shouldered and lithe. The deeply tanned face was lighted by a pair of steady

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brown eyes; nice eyes, thought Judith. There was a good firm mouth unhidden by a closely-trimmed mustache, a straight nose, slightly peeled at the end, a broad forehead, an average supply of tousled brown hair, and a square, pugnacious chin. It wasn't a remarkable face; Tom Randall wasn't a remarkable man; he was merely one of a type of clean, muscular, honest college-bred young Americans, alert, resourceful, plentiful enough, thank Heaven, to be accepted as a matter of course.

He wore rubber-soled shoes, a pair of stained khaki trousers and a blue flannel shirt open at the neck and thrust well above the elbows; a rather severe test, which not every fellow could have stood as well as Tom, who somehow made the scanty, unlovely costume seem swagger and picturesque and beyond question just the right attire for the time and place.

Judith's inspection, the matter of a moment only, ended in silent approval. For some reason it seemed to her now that to have

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worried over a runaway oar had been a childish and totally unnecessary action.

"What are you going to do with me, please?" she asked.

"Take you aboard, deliver you to your friends, and claim the reward," he answered promptly.

"I'm so glad you're not going to hold me for ransom," she replied. He laughed boyishly.

"You shouldn't put the idea into my head. If you'll hold on a moment more I'll get that painter. That's it. Now, please."

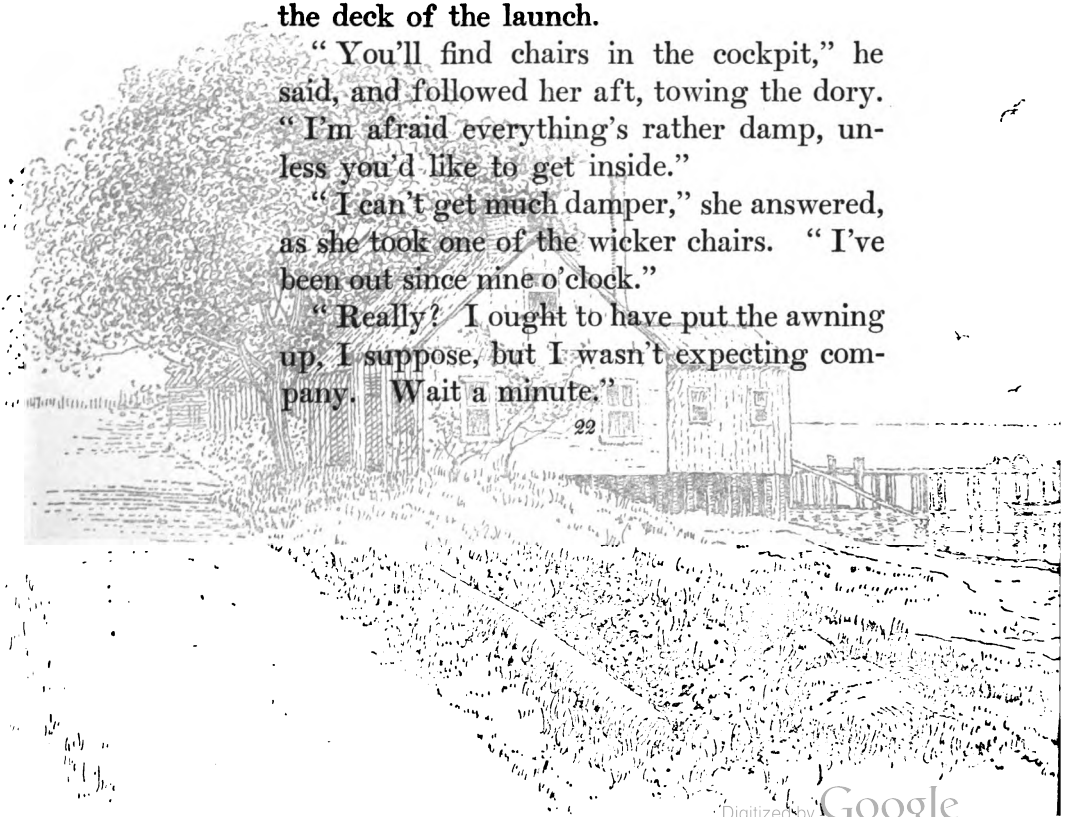
She took his hand and he pulled her up to the deck of the launch.

"You'll find chairs in the cockpit," he said, and followed her aft, towing the dory. "I'm afraid everything's rather damp, unless you'd like to get inside."

"I can't get much damper," she answered, as she took one of the wicker chairs. "I've been out since nine o'clock."

"Really? I ought to have put the awning up, I suppose, but I wasn't expecting company. Wait a minute."





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He finished tying the dory painter to the stern cleat and ducked his way into the cabin, reappearing an instant later with an oilskin coat.

"Thank you, but I don't need that," she protested. "I'll button my sweater again."

"You'd better," he answered, calmly, holding the garment up for her to slip into. "You might catch cold or something."

She hesitated an instant, then arose and put on the coat.

"That's it," he said, heartily. "Now suppose you tell me where you want to go."

"But I fear I'm taking you out of your way."

He shrugged his shoulders, standing before her with hands in pockets and feet wide apart.

"Not a bit. I haven't any way. I'm just kicking around. Sooner or later I guess I'll strike Greenhaven—if I don't strike a rock first. To tell the truth, I don't know where I am. I never ran a launch until the day before yesterday; it's all a



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gamble with me, and one place 's as good as another."

"Then if you'll put me ashore on Sweetwater Island I'll be awfully much obliged," said Judith.

"Sounds all right," he laughed, "but where *is* Sweetwater Island?"

"Over there where you hear the bell," she answered. "That's the bell at the lighthouse, and—that's where I live."

"At the lighthouse?" he asked, incredulously. Judith nodded. Tom stared a moment and then shifted his gaze toward where the bell's monotonous clanging sounded through the fog. "So that's a fog-bell, is it?" he asked. "I wondered what it was. You see, I'm not much of a sailor. Well, here goes, and the Lord have mercy on us!"

He threw the clutch, turned the brass steering wheel until the launch's nose pointed toward the island, and looked back at the dory, which came dutifully along at the end of its painter.

"I guess I'd better go slow," he said.



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"Are there any rocks between here and the island?"

"No," she replied, "but there's a spar-buoy somewhere about. I passed it a few minutes ago."

"Oh, that's all right, if you mean one of those big sticks. I haven't missed more than one of those all the way from Gloucester. They don't count; you just slide off of them. How did you happen to be messing around in that Cleopatra's barge back there, if it isn't an impertinent question?"

"I was out fishing and——"

"Catch anything? What were you fishing for?" he interrupted.

"I don't know; anything." She laughed softly. "No, I didn't catch a thing. Some one—I mean some fish, ate my bait off almost as soon as I put it down and so I suppose the other fish didn't care much about my hook."

"Didn't you have any more bait?"

"Oh, yes, a whole pail full, but it looked so—so nasty that I didn't like to touch it."

Tom laughed and she followed suit.



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"And so you fished for two hours with an empty hook!" he said.

She nodded. "Silly, wasn't it?"

"It surely was," he laughed. "And how did you happen to lose your oar?"

"I—I think I left it in the oar-lock and it just slid out and went away."

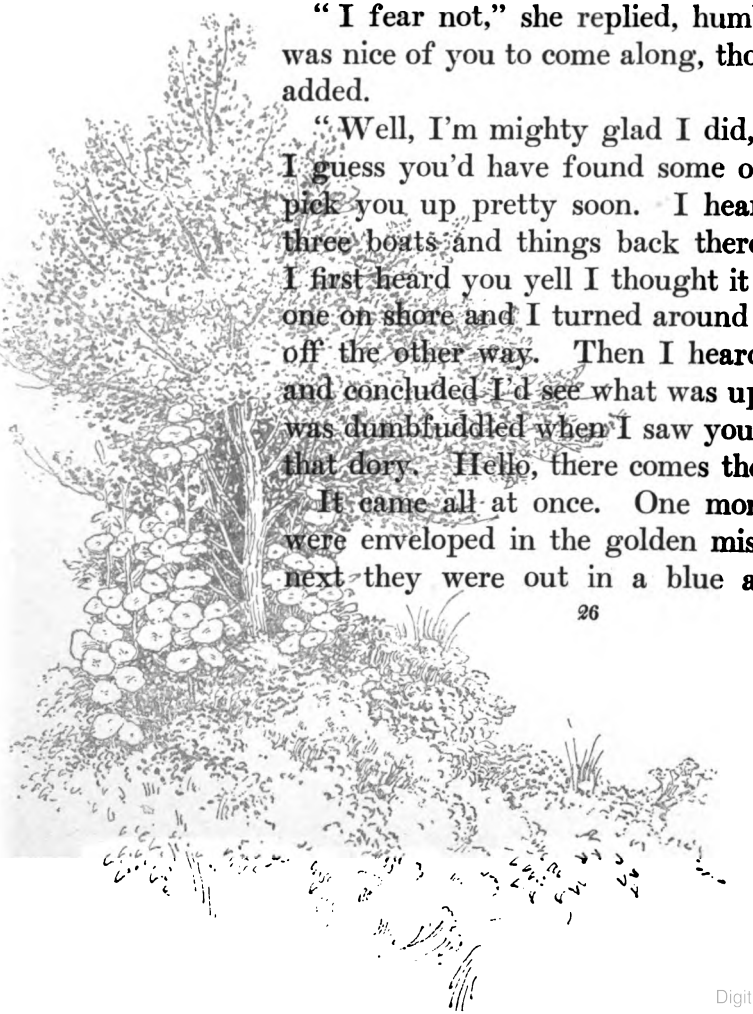
"I guess," he said with a chuckle, "you're not much more of a sailor than I am."

"I fear not," she replied, humbly. "It was nice of you to come along, though," she added.

"Well, I'm mighty glad I did, although I guess you'd have found some one else to pick you up pretty soon. I heard two or three boats and things back there. When I first heard you yell I thought it was some one on shore and I turned around and kited off the other way. Then I heard it again and concluded I'd see what was up. I sure was dumbfuddled when I saw you sitting in that dory. Hello, there comes the sun!"

It came all at once. One moment they were enveloped in the golden mist and the next they were out in a blue and green





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world with the sunlight sparkling on the lazy sea. Back of them the fog, a gray bank, was rolling inland.

"That feels good," said Tom. "Is that your island there ahead?"

"Yes," answered Judith. She threw off the oilskin and moved forward to the edge of the cabin, looking along the wet roof at the squatty white tower and the little story-and-a-half dwelling that sprawled beneath. "The landing's on this side, to the left of the light. Can you see it?"

"Yes," he answered. "Can I get up to it in this?"

"There's four feet at low tide," she replied.

"That's easy. The *Vagrant* only draws three. And so that's where you live?"

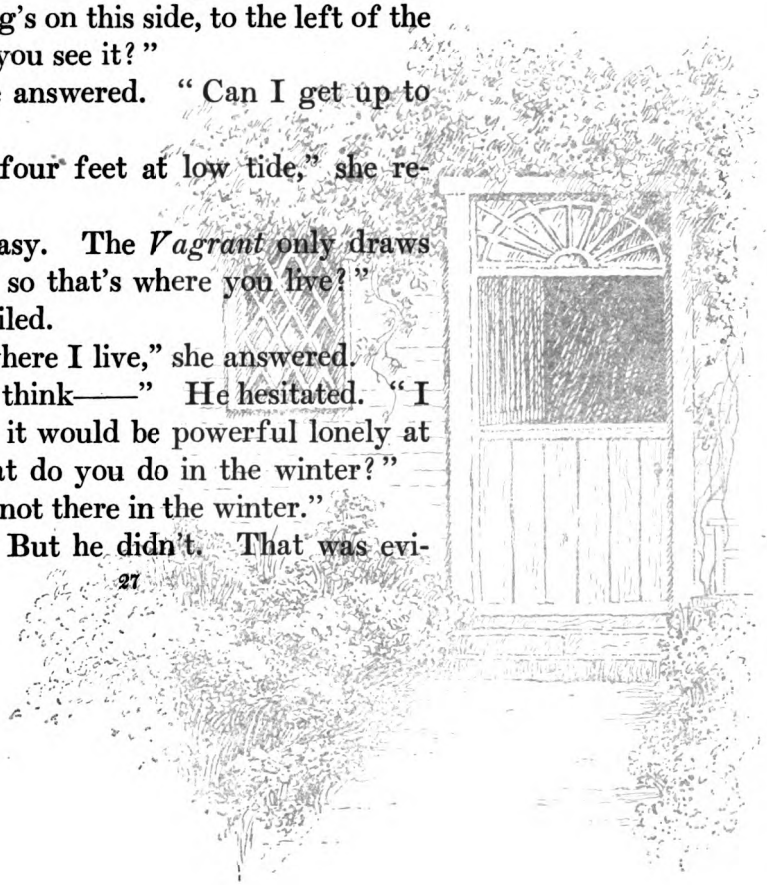
Judith smiled.

"That's where I live," she answered.

"I should think——" He hesitated. "I should think it would be powerful lonely at times. What do you do in the winter?"

"Oh, I'm not there in the winter."

"I see." But he didn't. That was evi-





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dent from the puzzled glance he threw at her. "It's quite a good-sized little island, isn't it?" he added.

"It's about twelve acres, I think. And there's a lovely lake in the middle of it. It's really very beautiful. It's fresh water, too, and that's the funny thing about it."

"The lake? Say, that is queer, isn't it? I suppose that's where it gets its name?"

Judith nodded. "Yes, Sweetwater Island. There's Poggsdale beyond there, on the main-land."

"That looks like snow over there," he observed, following the direction of her gaze. "What is it?"

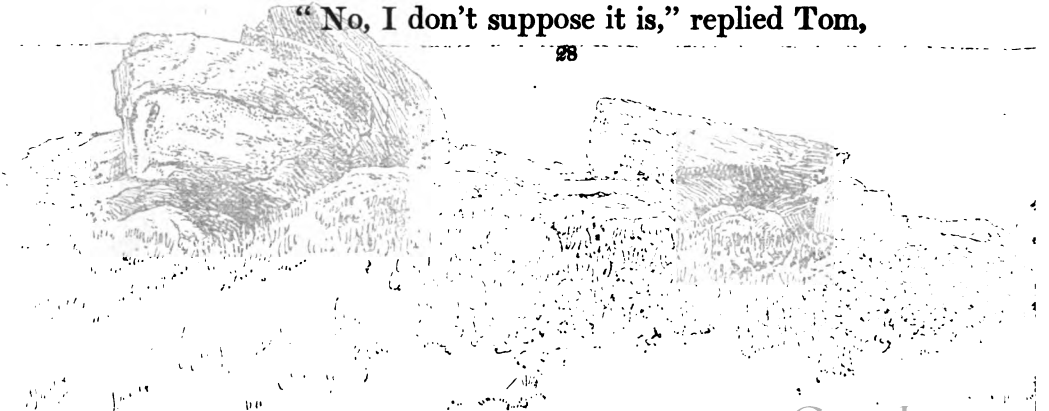
"White sand. Those are the dunes. It does look like snow, doesn't it? Don't you think you had better steer more to the left?"

"That's so! Starboard it is, sir—or port, I can never remember which is which. I say, considering the fact that I've just rescued you from a watery grave, don't you think that you might tell me your name?"

"Is it necessary?" asked Judith, gravely.

"No, I don't suppose it is," replied Tom,





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lamely. "Only when you rescue a person you can't help taking a sort of—of interest in them, can you?"

"No, I suppose you can't," said Judith, with a smile. "And just to prove that I'm not ungrateful I'll tell you my name—if you won't ask any more."

"Of course I won't!" he exclaimed, indignantly. "And if you'd rather not tell me that——"

"Oh, but I don't mind——"

"You needn't think," he continued, aggrievedly, "that just because you happen to find me looking like a tramp that I—I——"

"But I don't, really!"

"Besides, I could easily find out in the village!"

"Of course you could," she answered, soothingly. "My name is—is Judith."

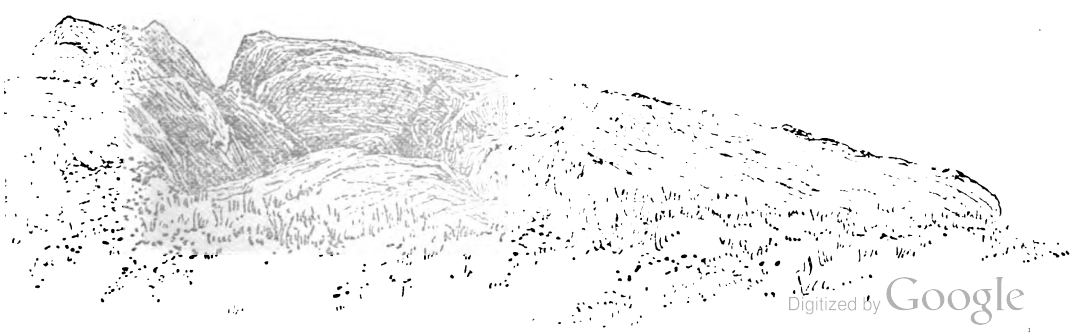
He waited, but she didn't continue.

"Miss Judith——?"

"Yes, Miss Judith," she answered.

"But that's just your front name, isn't it?"





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"Yes."

"And your other?"

"Oh, my last name means nothing," she replied. She turned her head and smiled when he couldn't see.

"Well, I'll bet I've got the best part of it," he said, cheerfully, after a moment. "I suppose the other's Smith or Jones or something like that and you're ashamed of it."

"Or, perhaps, Poggs," she suggested, quietly.

"Poggs! *Poggs?*" he exclaimed. "I —I don't believe it!"

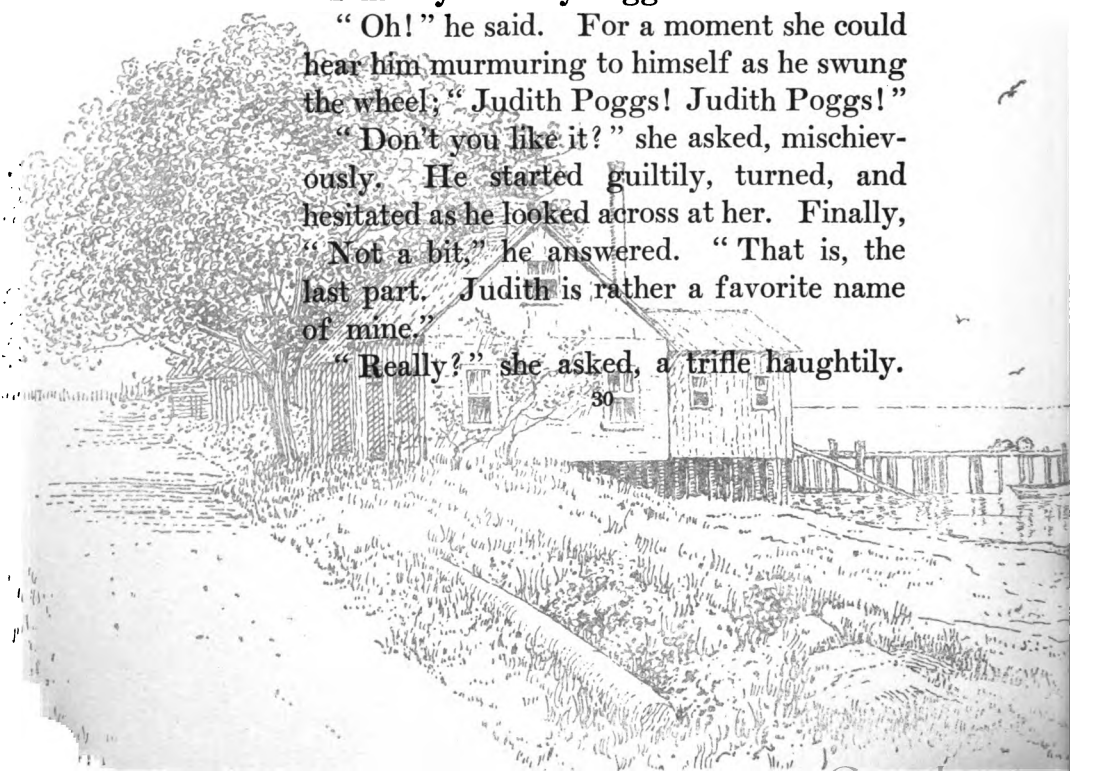
"I haven't asked you to," she laughed. "I merely—merely suggested it."

"Oh!" he said. For a moment she could hear him murmuring to himself as he swung the wheel; "Judith Poggs! Judith Poggs!"

"Don't you like it?" she asked, mischievously. He started guiltily, turned, and hesitated as he looked across at her. Finally, "Not a bit," he answered. "That is, the last part. Judith is rather a favorite name of mine."

"Really?" she asked, a trifle haughtily.





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"I'm sorry you don't like the rest of it. What would you advise me to do about it, pray?"

"Get married," he replied bluntly, "and change it."

"Am I to take that as a proposal?" she inquired, mockingly.

"Well, it's customary to marry your rescuer, isn't it?" he countered.

"But not compulsory!"

Tom laughed. "We ought to be glad of that, eh?" He threw the clutch and the *Vagrant* slid in toward the little landing. "I wonder if you'd mind taking the boat-hook and fending us off?" he asked. "I haven't learned to negotiate landings very brilliantly yet. I usually aim for the middle and run the launch up on the float, but this time, out of respect for my guest, I'll see if I can't be a little more—er—suave. That's it; thank you."

Judith had scrambled to the cabin deck, seized the boat-hook and saved some of the *Vagrant's* paint. Never having assisted at



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a landing before, she was secretly rather proud of her efforts.

"Don't you think I did that nicely?" she asked.

But Tom, hanging over the edge of the cockpit and striving to bring the launch to a stop by filling his hands with splinters from the float, wasn't so enthusiastic.

"It's customary to stop the boat before it goes by," he grunted. "If you'll hold her to the landing a minute I'll throw off your gondola."

Judith obeyed silently. Even if he was her rescuer, he was very impolite and ungrateful, she thought. Tom untied the dory and pulled it up on the little strip of sand beside the landing. Then he held his hand to Judith. But she disregarded it, jumping lightly from the deck.

"I'm sorry to have been such a bother to you," she said, formally, "and I thank you for coming to my assistance. Good-morning."

Tom looked a little surprised at her tone.

"You're very welcome, Miss Judith. But

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if I were you I'd take someone along to row the next time. You might not have such good luck, you know."

"Oh, please!" she begged. "I'm already frightfully in debt to you; don't add to my obligations by bestowing advice."

Tom frowned.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," he said, stiffly. "It's none of my business, of course, but if I were your father——"

"Yes, if you were?" she inquired, with flattering interest.

"Well, I'd see that you didn't go messing around in boats and risking your life." Tom jumped into the launch and seized the boat-hook.

"I'm sure you'd make a very nice father," she answered, smilingly. "You seem so prudent and considerate. Good-morning, Mister—— I don't think you told me your name, did you?"

Tom observed her suspiciously. Then his hand sought his breast and came away empty, and he laughed.

"Sorry I haven't a card with me," he



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said. "My name is Randall—Tom Randall."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" she breathed, sympathetically.

"What for?"

"For you. That's such a horrid name, isn't it? And you couldn't even change it by getting married, could you?"

Tom stared down at her a moment, while the *Vagrant* floated slowly away from the landing. Then a smile crept over his face and a look of admiration followed it.

"By Jove!" he murmured, softly. "I wish I had you back here on the boat!"

"You flatter me! May I ask why?"

"So I could give you what you deserve," he answered.

"And that is?"

"A kiss."

The color swept into Judith's face in spite of herself.

"You—you cad!" she said, scornfully.

Tom laughed, but his cheeks took on a redder tinge under her swift glance of contempt. He jumped down into the cockpit



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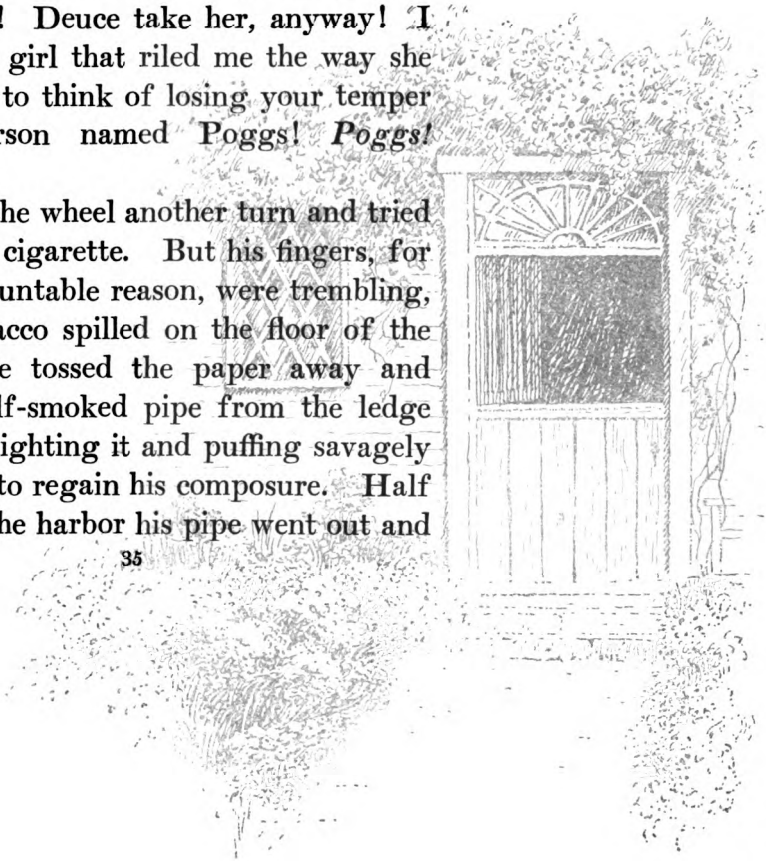
and thrust forward the clutch viciously. The *Vagrant* sprang forward as he turned the wheel sharply. Clear of the landing, he glanced back. The girl, a lithe, white-clad figure against the blue sky, was climbing unhurriedly up the little grassy slope toward the house. He watched until she disappeared. Then he gave himself a shake.

"By Jove!" he muttered, "she's right; I *was* a cad! I wonder what in thunder got into me! Deuce take her, anyway! I never met a girl that riled me the way she does! And to think of losing your temper with a person named Poggs! *Poggs!* Thunder!"

He gave the wheel another turn and tried to fashion a cigarette. But his fingers, for some unaccountable reason, were trembling, and the tobacco spilled on the floor of the cockpit. He tossed the paper away and picked a half-smoked pipe from the ledge beside him, lighting it and puffing savagely in an effort to regain his composure. Half way across the harbor his pipe went out and





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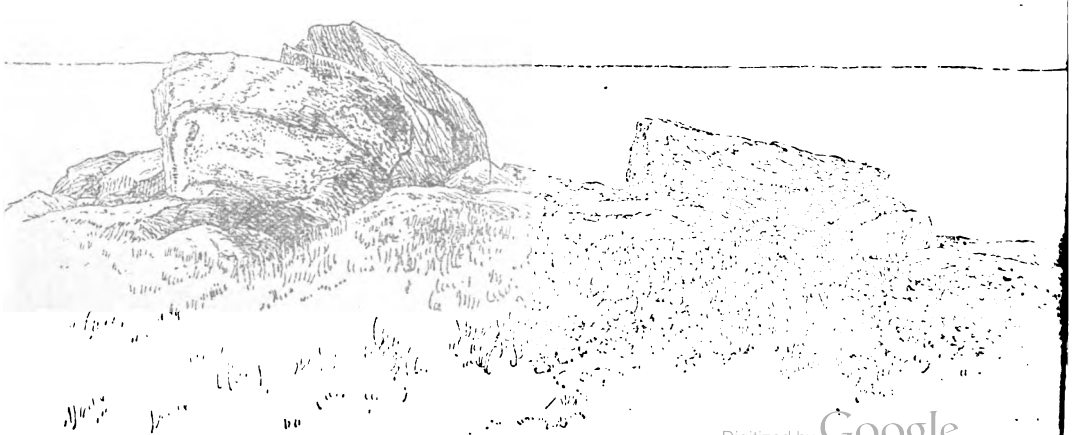
he dropped it onto the cabin roof and looked meditatively back at the island.

"What I ought to do," he murmured, "is to go back there and ask her pardon. But—no, I'm hanged if I do! *Poggs!* Gosh!"



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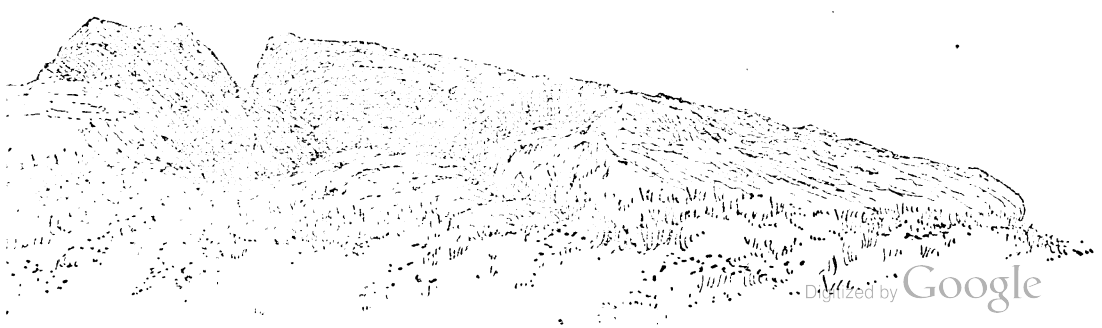
## III.

It was mid-afternoon. Seated in a comfortable cranny of the ledge under the lighthouse, Judith was writing a letter. There was a rug beneath her and a soft cushion at her back. Beside her was a gold-monogrammed basket containing a package of letters, ink, pens, stamps and similar necessities for correspondence, the tray of which, with its writing-pad and assortment of paper and envelopes, rested on her knees. A brightly-bound novel, too, lay on the edge of the rug, but it had yet to be opened. A few feet below her was the water, eddying softly in and out amongst the rocks and swaying the bronze-green and brown fringe of seaweed. The fog was only a memory. Overhead the sky was blue and clear, and across the outer harbor the green-hilled shore back of Piper's Reef looked wonderfully near. Before her lay the wide expanse of the bay, the South Shore dimly visible like a smoky smudge athwart the horizon. A





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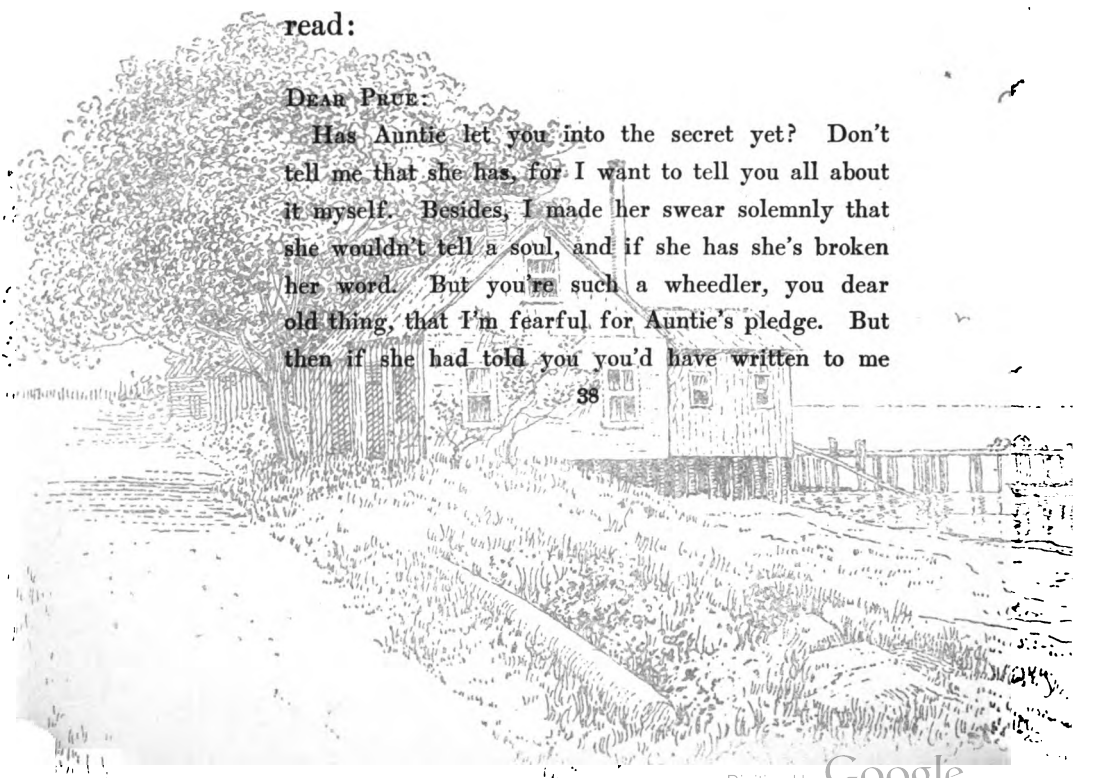
gentle breeze blew from the south, salted by many leagues of water, and clutched with playful fingers the unbound locks of her hair. Now and then the shrill, creaky cry of a gull reached her, or the distant blare of a whistle. Otherwise there were no sounds to disturb her quiet. The bell in its wooden tower overhead had long since ceased its tolling.

She wrote swiftly, but with long pauses during which she nibbled the end of the ivory pen-holder like a school-girl and gazed musingly out to sea. At last many pages were filled with her rather large writing and she read them over. And this is what she read:

DEAR PRUE:

Has Auntie let you into the secret yet? Don't tell me that she has, for I want to tell you all about it myself. Besides, I made her swear solemnly that she wouldn't tell a soul, and if she has she's broken her word. But you're such a wheedler, you dear old thing, that I'm fearful for Auntie's pledge. But then if she had told you you'd have written to me





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SHE NIBBLED THE END OF THE IVORY PEN-HOLDER

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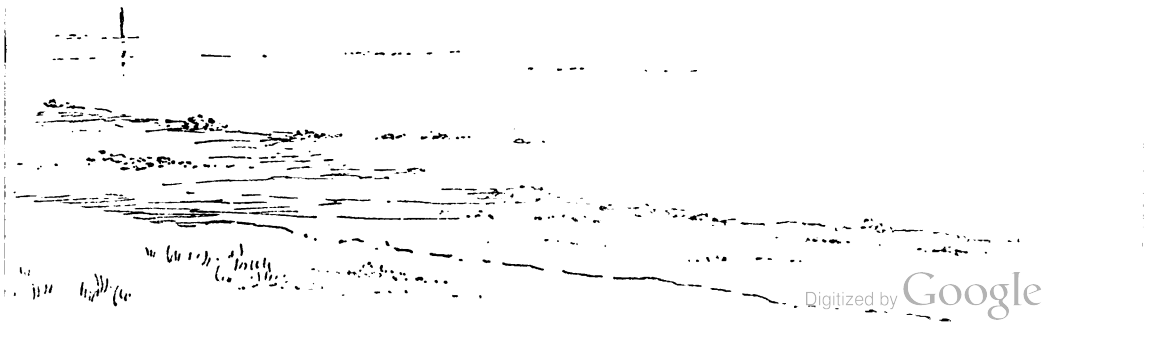
before this, wouldn't you? So I don't believe she has. Listen, Prue; I'm in hiding! Isn't that romantic? I've exiled myself on a desert island! And, oh, I'm having a lovely time. I don't have to dress for dinner or for anything else, and Janet is quite heartbroken about it. You see she wants me to look my nicest because—but I haven't come to that yet.

Of course Auntie thinks I am crazy. The idea of running away from Newport just at the beginning of the season, especially under *the circumstances!* Prue, dear, the circumstances were just what did it. I wanted to get away, quite away by myself, and think it over. Can't you understand that? Auntie declares that there's nothing to think over; that I am a very fortunate girl and ought to be proud and happy. But that's the funny part of it. I'm not proud at all! And if I'm happy it's not because I'm to have the opportunity of becoming the Countess Salzstadt. Prue, I'm thinking it over; I'm deciding. At least, I'm supposed to be. I told myself I would. But somehow there doesn't seem to be any time; there's always something more interesting to do than think and decide—even if it's only writing to you, who don't care what happens to me and who haven't thought of me once since I came away! I go to





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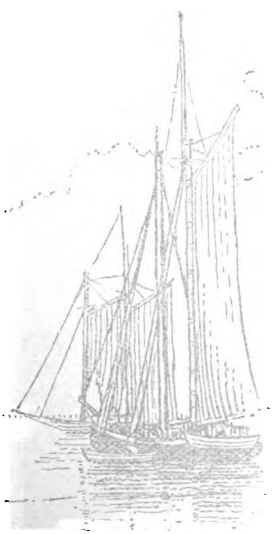
lonely places and sit on the rocks and say to myself: "Now I will think about it." But something always happens; a wave comes in or the sun goes under a cloud or a boat happens by, and I don't decide at all. But then, it's only nonsense, after all, for deep down inside of me I know very well that when the Count asks me to do him the honor of becoming Mrs. Count and placing my money at his disposal I shall just say "yes" like a silly little idiot. Prue, dear, do you suppose I shall like living in a castle in Liechtenstein? I fear me, I fear me!

Well, to go back to the beginning. When I decided to go away and think it over I didn't know where to go, and so, finally, I consulted Janet. And Janet solved the problem. Janet's father lives here on the island and manages the lighthouse, and Janet's mother lives here on the island and manages him. And Janet told me about it until I just had to see it for myself. And it's perfectly lovely. It's a great big island, with a lake of nice clean water in the middle of it, and sandy beaches and big ledges of rock and trees and birds and quietude. And nobody to bother me! No teas, nor bridges, nor dinners, nor dances, nor tennis, nor autos, nor—*flubbery!* (Prue, dear, I just coined that word; isn't it lovely





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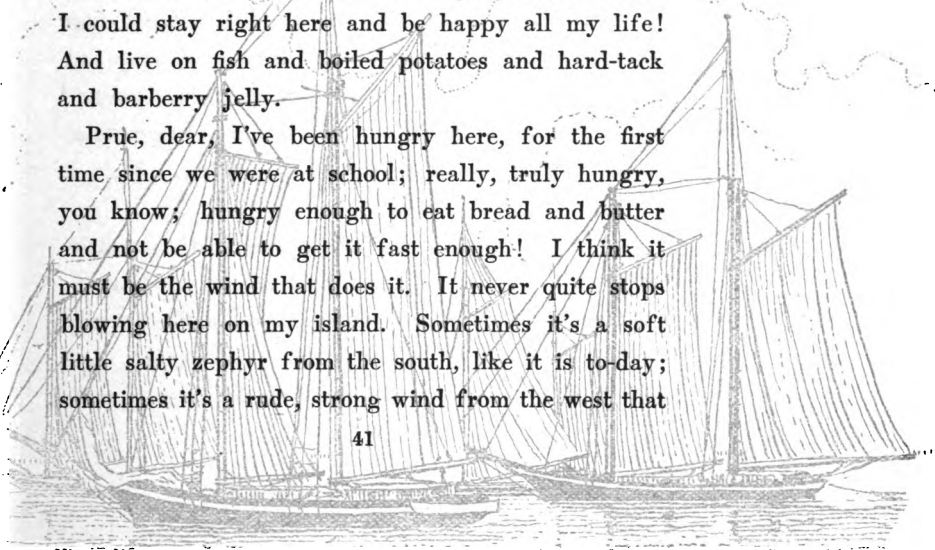
and expressive?) And it all shows how much more desirable it is to have a maid whose folks keep a lighthouse than one whose folks live in France and can't be reached when you want solitude. I'm sure it more than justifies my choice in engaging Janet, doesn't it?

I've been here two weeks and I'm more in love with it than ever. I should love to buy the island, but Captain George—he's Janet's father—says it belongs to the Government and that I can't. What's the use of having millions of money, Prue dear, if you can't buy a thing when you like it? Sometimes I wish that the money, and the tiresome railways and all the rest of it were sunk off Piper's Reef. Then I could stay right here and be happy all my life! And live on fish and boiled potatoes and hard-tack and barberry jelly.

Prue, dear, I've been hungry here, for the first time since we were at school; really, truly hungry, you know; hungry enough to eat bread and butter and not be able to get it fast enough! I think it must be the wind that does it. It never quite stops blowing here on my island. Sometimes it's a soft little salty zephyr from the south, like it is to-day; sometimes it's a rude, strong wind from the west that





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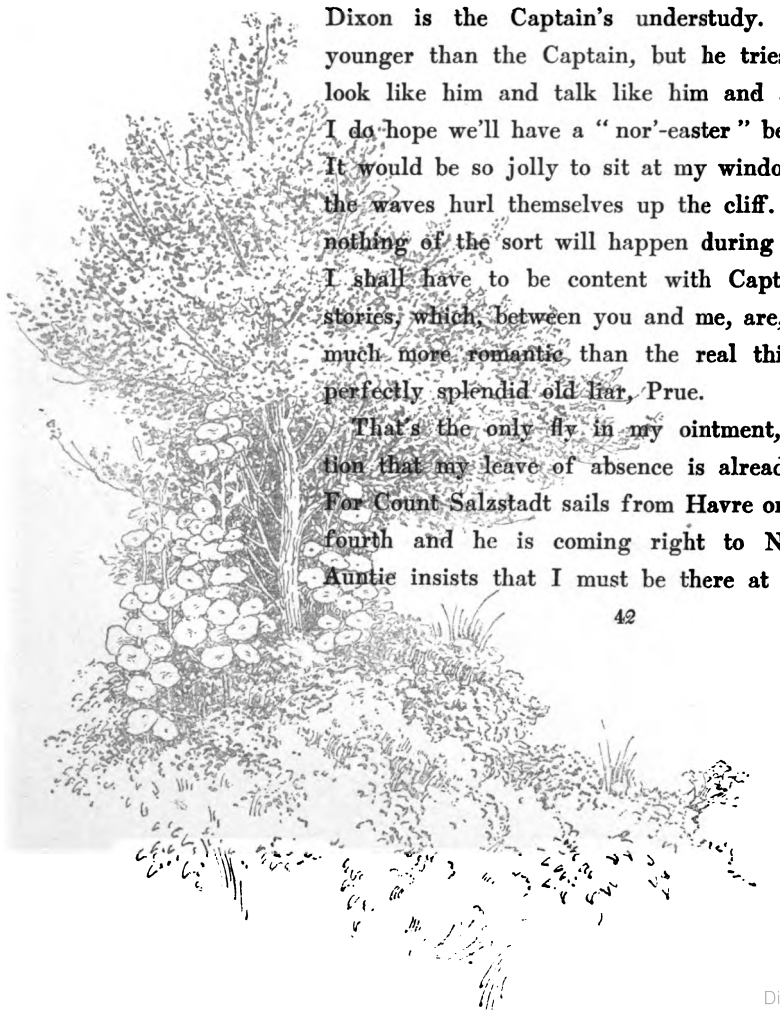
blows across the outer harbor and brings faint strains from the hotel orchestra; sometimes it hisses and howls from the east or the north and rattles the windows of my chamber until Janet sticks pegs around them. And sometimes, or so they tell me, it's a mighty gale that blows ships ashore and throws the spray across the platform of the lighthouse. Then Captain George and Mister Dixon fill their pipes and settle down for three days at home. Mister Dixon is the Captain's understudy. He's much younger than the Captain, but he tries his best to look like him and talk like him and act like him. I do hope we'll have a "nor'-easter" before I leave. It would be so jolly to sit at my window and watch the waves hurl themselves up the cliff. But I fear nothing of the sort will happen during my stay and I shall have to be content with Captain George's stories, which, between you and me, are, I'm certain, much more romantic than the real thing. He's a perfectly splendid old liar, Prue.

That's the only fly in my ointment, the realization that my leave of absence is already half over. For Count Salzstadt sails from Havre on the twenty-fourth and he is coming right to Newport, and Auntie insists that I must be there at least a week





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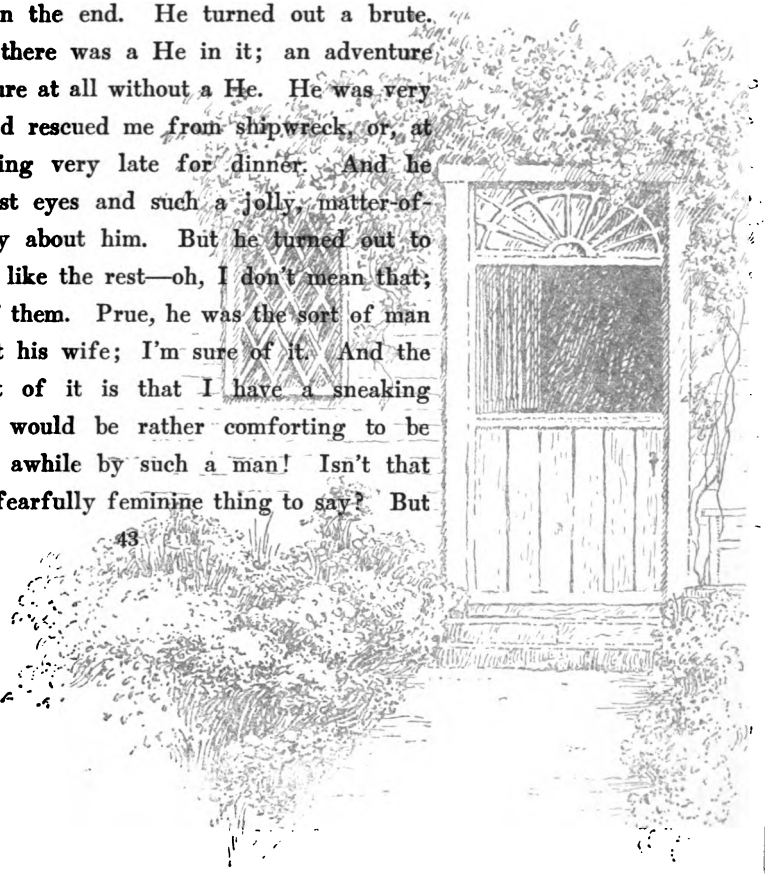
ahead. Thus ends my break in training. Oh, but it's all right, of course. I shall be a very dutiful Countess and learn to talk in my throat and eat nice, smelly things. And you and Jerry are to come and visit me every winter. You do promise, don't you, dear? For just between ourselves, I fancy that sometimes I shall be a little bit lonely, for neither Vienna nor Paris nor Lake Constance is quite like dear, dirty, messy old New York, *n'est-ce-pas?*

Prue, dear, I had my first adventure this morning, my first since I reached my island. But it was disappointing in the end. He turned out a brute. For of course there was a He in it; an adventure isn't an adventure at all without a He. He was very nice at first and rescued me from shipwreck, or, at least, from being very late for dinner. And he had the loveliest eyes and such a jolly, matter-of-fact, bossy way about him. But he turned out to be just a brute like the rest—oh, I don't mean that; like so many of them. Prue, he was the sort of man that would beat his wife; I'm sure of it. And the disgusting part of it is that I have a sneaking notion that it would be rather comforting to be beaten once in awhile by such a man! Isn't that a low-spirited, fearfully feminine thing to say? But





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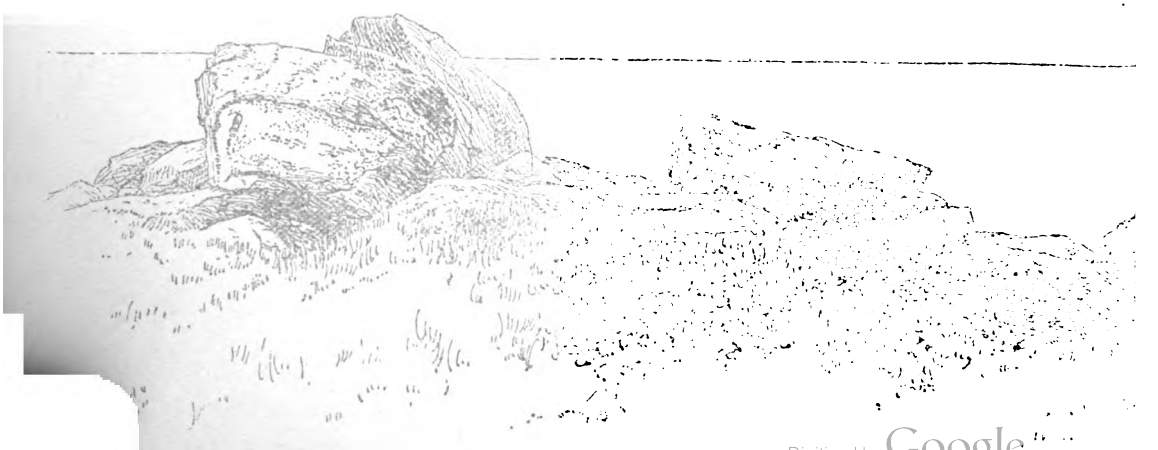
don't be alarmed, dear; he won't beat me, for he's gone, utterly and forever, my Prince Khaki. And I think I'm a little bit sorry, for Romance is Romance even on a desert island; and besides, I'd love to punish him for—for being a brute.

And now you've had my confession. I wish you were here with me, but it wouldn't do. You'd bring frills and graces and insist on playing double dummy when I want to think. Or you'd bewitch Mister Dixon and break his heart. You'd be the serpent in my island Eden, you dear, flirtatious Frou Frou. Write me a nice long letter, like a good child, and tell me everything that has happened. Not that I am interested, of course, but the philosopher on her island would fain laugh at the follies of the foolish. With a whole bunch of love,

Yours in exile,

JUDY.



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## IV.

TOM RANDALL came down the gangway at the town landing, crossed the float and tossed his purchases into the bottom of the *Vagrant's* little cedar tender. The launch rocked lazily to and fro out in the basin beyond the fish wharf, her ports aglisten in the morning sunlight. A good-natured loiterer detached himself from the group at the head of the gangway and ambled down to untie Tom's painter.

"A fine morning," he ventured.

"Bully," replied Tom, his gaze wandering over the harbor, out to the island and back to the little covey of skiffs and dories tied to the float. "Whose boat is that?" he asked, pointing to a pea-green dory that looked familiar.

"Captain George Poggs's," replied the other. "He keeps the light on the island. Over for mail and supplies, he said."

Tom seated himself on an overturned boat and drew forth his pipe. The other



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understood the signal, seated himself alongside and produced his own blackened briar. Tom proffered his pouch and when the match had been exchanged he asked:

"Live there all the year round, does he?"

"Yes, he and Ben Dixon. *And* his family."

"The Captain's family, you mean?"

The other nodded.

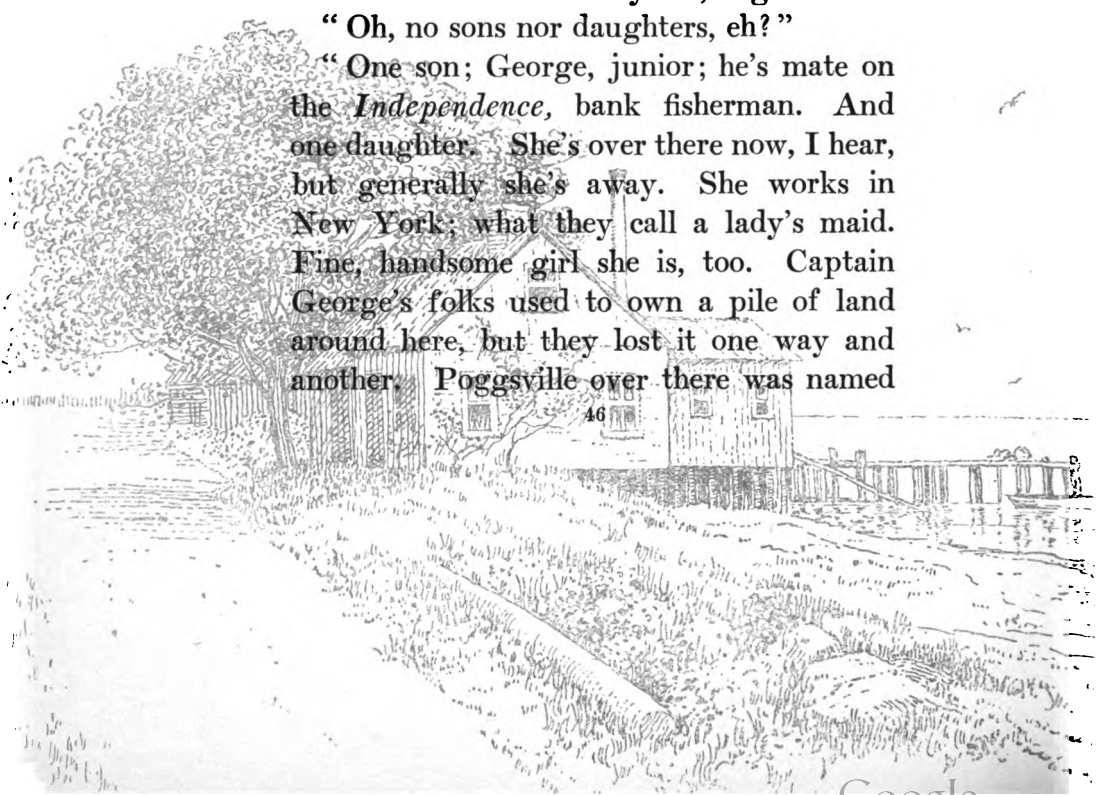
"I should think it would be a bit lonely for women out there."

"Well, there's only Mrs. Poggs, and she's been there ever since the Captain took hold, and that's all of twelve years, I guess."

"Oh, no sons nor daughters, eh?"

"One son; George, junior; he's mate on the *Independence,* bank fisherman. And one daughter. She's over there now, I hear, but generally she's away. She works in New York; what they call a lady's maid. Fine, handsome girl she is, too. Captain George's folks used to own a pile of land around here, but they lost it one way and another. Poggsville over there was named





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after Captain George's great-grandfather."

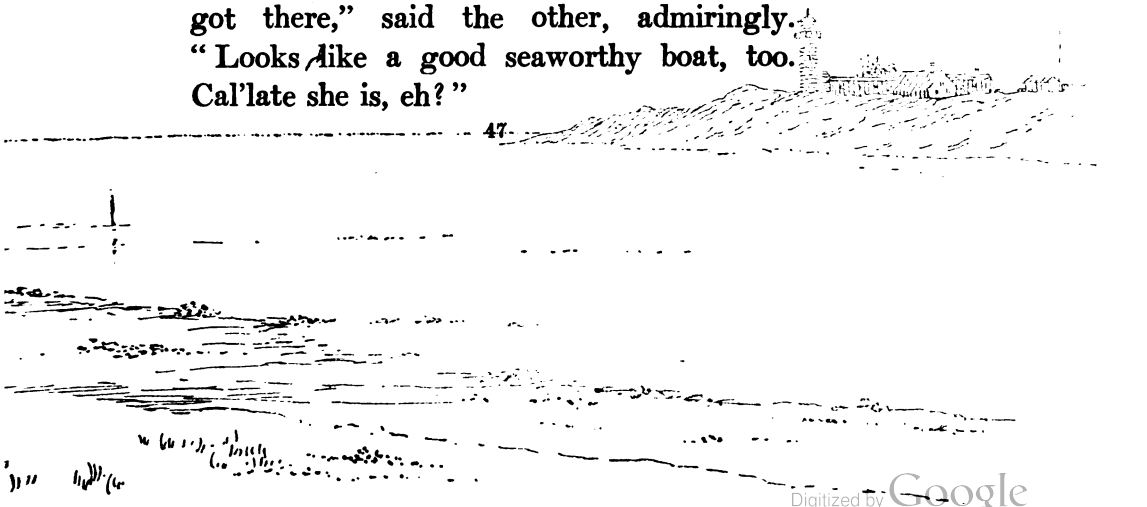
"I see. I've never been over a lighthouse. Do they allow visitors?"

"Sure! Captain George 'd be glad to show you 'round. Folks go over from the hotel now and then. Funny thing, now, sir, but I ain't ever been over to the island in my life! O' course I've fished all around it, but what that lighthouse is like on the inside I ain't got no more idea than you have! That's funny, ain't it now? Reminds me of a fellow down to Boston that I heard about. He'd lived right there all his life and hadn't ever been up Bunker Hill Monument. I guess if Sweetwater Island was ten or twenty miles away I'd been all over it before this."

"Yes, that's the way it goes," answered Tom, absently. "Well, I guess I'll go aboard."

"Nice, trim-looking little launch you've got there," said the other, admiringly. "Looks like a good seaworthy boat, too. Cal'late she is, eh?"





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"Yes, I think so. She isn't mine. I'm just loafing around in her. I haven't struck any weather yet, and don't know as I want to. I'm no sailor."

"Well, you wouldn't need to be to run that launch," said the other. "I guess you'd be all right as long as the gasoline held out."

"Probably," said Tom.

He embarked with the enthusiastic assistance of his new acquaintance and pulled out to the *Vagrant*. He stowed his purchases away in the cupboard above the two-burner oil stove and seating himself in one of the wicker chairs under the awning put his feet on the other and relighted his pipe. When he had reached the landing he had been fully determined to up anchor and away. Since his arrival yesterday noon he had exhausted the possibilities of Greenhaven. He had tramped the curving, narrow streets of the little town in the afternoon and had taken dinner at the hotel in the evening. And there was no reason for staying longer, no reason except——

His gaze wandered across to the island,

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a green oasis in the silver and blue of the harbor, and to the little cluster of gleaming white buildings at the point.

"A lady's maid!" he muttered, incredulously. "That's perfect rot! Ladies' maids don't talk the way she did, nor look the way she did, nor dress the way she did. It's darned funny, that's what it is! And I've a good mind to run over there and——"

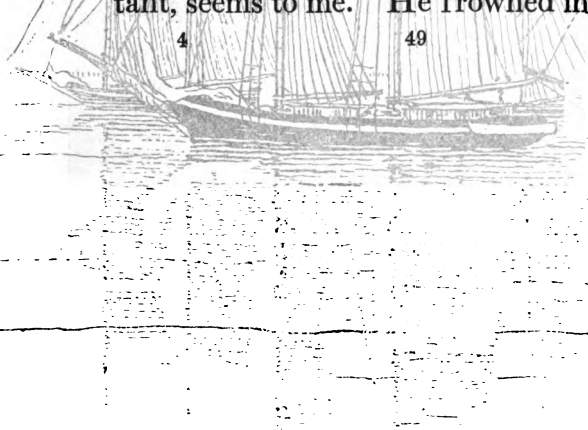
He arose, emptied the ashes from his pipe and stretched his arms.

"Confound the girl, anyway! She's got on my nerves! But I'm not going to waste my time chasing after a lady's maid by the name of Poggs! I'll get out of here before I do something foolish!"

He dropped his pipe into his pocket and ran his eye over the boat.

"Now, let's see," he considered. "Have I got everything? Coffee, bacon, four pounds of chops, two loaves of bread, condensed milk. That's all, wasn't it? Or was there something else? What was it I thought of last night? Something important, seems to me." He frowned intently for





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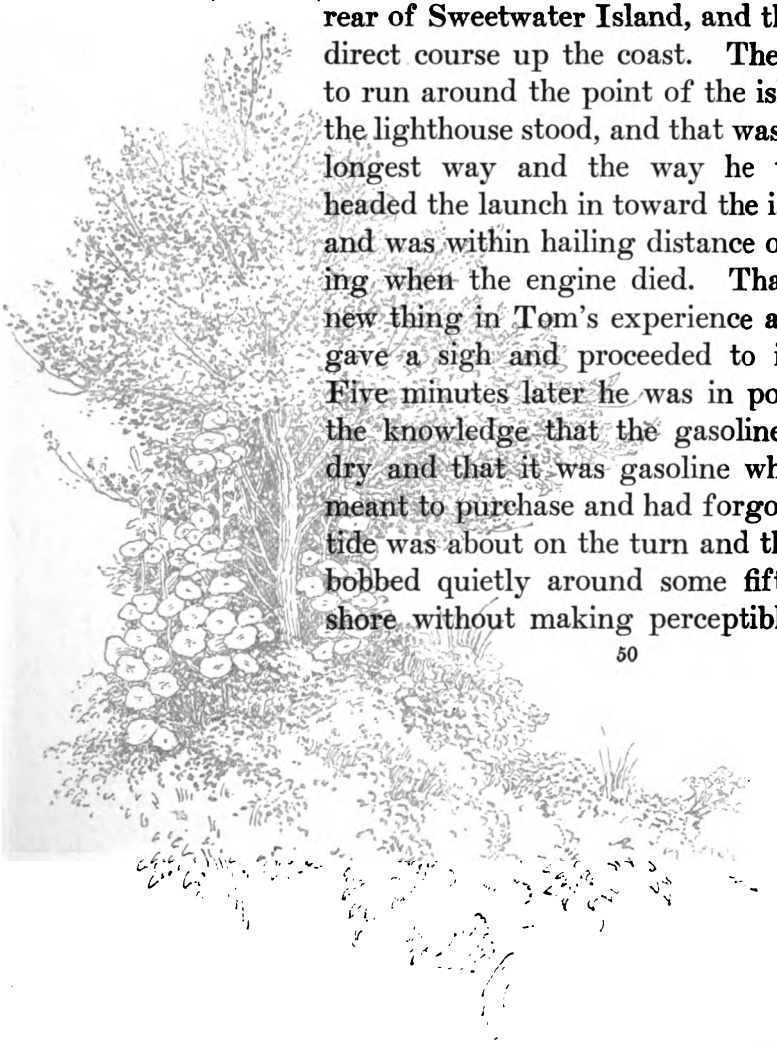
a minute without result. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Whatever it was, I guess the next stop will do for it. Now to haul the tender aboard."

Fifteen minutes later the *Vagrant* had left her berth and was chugging contentedly across the inner harbor. There were two ways before him. One was to pass to the rear of Sweetwater Island, and that was the direct course up the coast. The other was to run around the point of the island where the lighthouse stood, and that was by far the longest way and the way he took. He headed the launch in toward the island shore and was within hailing distance of the landing when the engine died. That wasn't a new thing in Tom's experience and he only gave a sigh and proceeded to investigate. Five minutes later he was in possession of the knowledge that the gasoline tank was dry and that it was gasoline which he had meant to purchase and had forgotten. The tide was about on the turn and the *Vagrant* bobbed quietly around some fifty feet off shore without making perceptible progress





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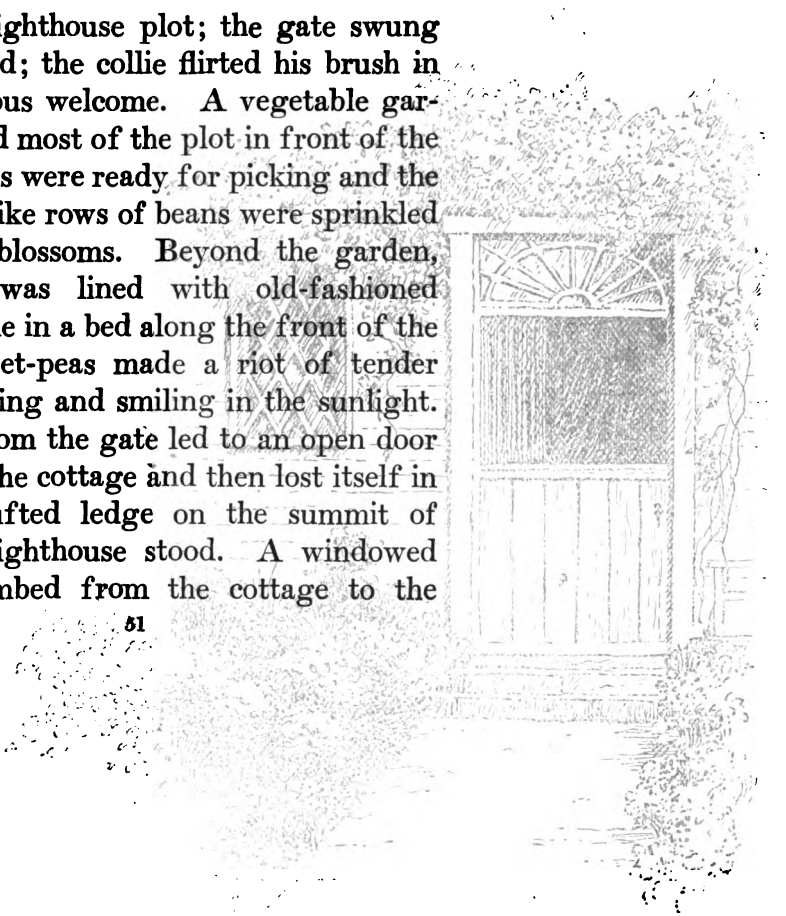
seaward or harborward. There was but one thing to do, and Tom did it. He dropped the anchor, tumbled into the tender and rowed to the landing.

From there a precipitate little path wound its way over the granite rocks, twisting and turning until it reached the grassy level above. Here there was a white picket fence, a gate and a collie. The fence enclosed the lighthouse plot; the gate swung easily inward; the collie flirted his brush in lazy, incurious welcome. A vegetable garden occupied most of the plot in front of the house. Peas were ready for picking and the low, hedge-like rows of beans were sprinkled with white blossoms. Beyond the garden, the fence was lined with old-fashioned flowers, while in a bed along the front of the cottage sweet-peas made a riot of tender colors, nodding and smiling in the sunlight. The path from the gate led to an open door in front of the cottage and then lost itself in the grass-tufted ledge on the summit of which the lighthouse stood. A windowed passage climbed from the cottage to the





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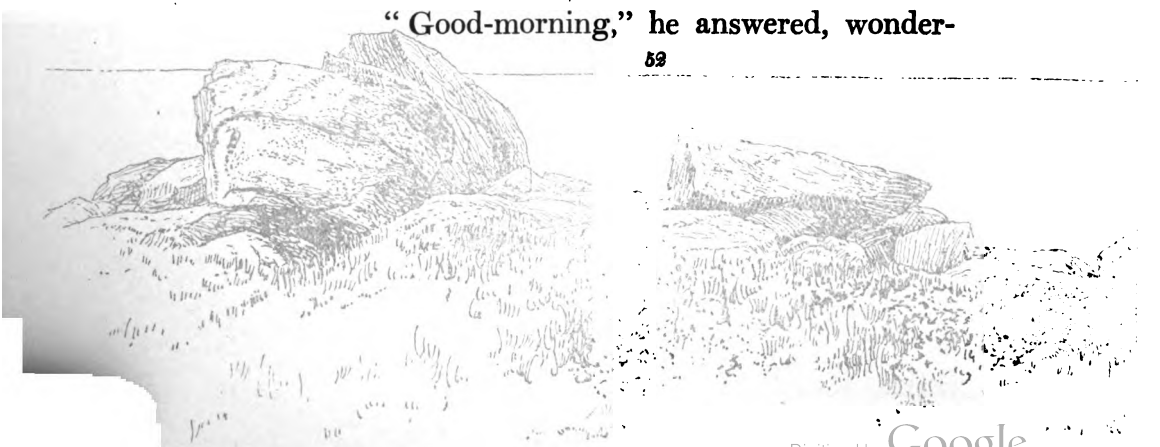
lighthouse, and beside it a bed of Sweet William was coming into bloom. The place had a charm of its own, and Tom felt it. The soft, salty breath of the sea was mingled with the odor of sweet-peas, the sunlight was like a clear, golden wine bathing the white stone tower and burnishing the curtained windows of the light, while against the little headland the bluest of blue seas lapped and murmured.

The collie followed Tom along the path, wagging his tail hospitably. The open door gave into a tiny hall, white-walled and carpeted with a gayly-hued linoleum, from which doors led right and left and a narrow staircase ascended with dizzy abruptness. Tom paused on the rough granite step and raised his hand to knock. But at that moment a voice challenged from overhead, and his hand dropped as he stepped back to glance upward into the blue eyes smiling down from the open window.

"Good-morning, Mr. Randall," said Judith.

"Good-morning," he answered, wonder-





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ing at the sudden embarrassment which seized him. "I came——" But there he stopped, forgetting why he had come, absorbed in the realization that the face bending above him was very lovely and that he had always, without really knowing it, been strongly partial to just that shade of hair.

"'I saw, I conquered,'" prompted Judith merrily.

"I see and am conquered," corrected Tom, finding his faculties. Judith bowed.

"Thank you," she said. "May I say, without offence, that your conversation this morning is an improvement over yesterday's?"

"You may say anything you want," answered Tom, very humbly. "The fact is, Miss—Miss Judith, that—I say, couldn't you come down here a minute? Would you mind very much? There's something I want to say."

"Something nice?" she asked.

"Very," he asserted.

She hesitated an instant, then nodded and disappeared. A moment later he caught



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the twinkle of her feet at the turn of the stairs and then she was facing him in the doorway, all smiles and kindness. She was in white save for an artful touch of lavender at waist and throat, and Tom's admiration was so evident that Judith laughed softly as she gave him her hand.

"Well?" she asked.

"I want to apologize for what I said yesterday," said Tom, earnestly. "You were right, you know; I was a cad. But I—I sort of lost my temper and—and——"

"To-day you've found it?" There was a bench at the left of the doorway and Judith took her place at one end of it. "I congratulate you. Won't you sit down, Mr. Randall?"

"I'm awfully sorry, really," he pursued, as he accepted the invitation. "I don't know what got into me. It was a beastly thing to say." Judith nodded.

"Yes, wasn't it?" she replied. "But since you apologize so nicely I'll have to forgive you, won't I?"

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"I hope you will," said Tom. "Yesterday——"

"Yesterday we came very near quarrelling," she interrupted. "Do you think there is any danger of it this morning?" Tom shook his head vehemently. "Because if there is," she pursued, "we'd better say good-bye now while we're both on our good behavior."

"I'm not going to quarrel," laughed Tom, settling back contentedly against the warm clapboards. "And I'm not ready to say good-bye," he added, boldly. "I just arrived."

"And you came just to make amends for yesterday?" she asked.

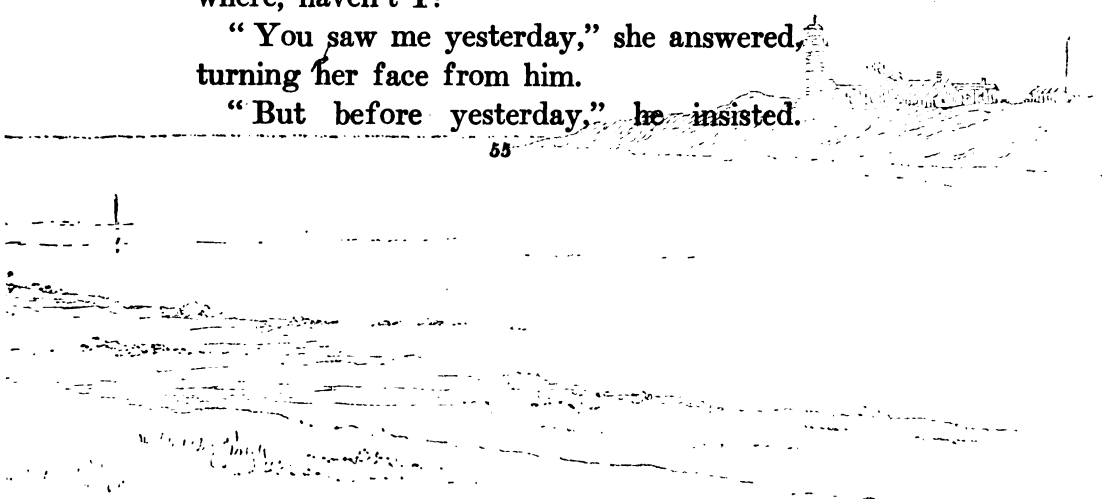
But Tom either didn't hear or preferred not to answer.

"I say," he exclaimed with a tone of puzzlement, "I've seen you before somewhere, haven't I?"

"You saw me yesterday," she answered, turning her face from him.

"But before yesterday," he insisted.





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"Either I've seen you or you remind me strongly of some one else."

"I hope she was nice?"

"I don't know," he answered. "I wish I could think."

"Oh, I doubt if it's much of a mystery. I live in New York—in the winter, and doubtless we have passed each other on the street; or perhaps we have really met somewhere. Do you think we have? If so it is not flattering of you to forget it."

"No," he said, thoughtfully, "I'm certain I've never met you before. Besides, you don't take me for a New Yorker, do you?"

"Aren't you?"

"Not a bit. I doubt if I've been there ten weeks altogether in the last six years. So you see it isn't likely that I've seen you there, is it?"

"I suppose not. But it isn't very important, is it?"

"Well, it bothers me," he answered, still regarding her intently.

"Don't let it," she said, carelessly. "We'll just play that we knew each other



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quite well in a previous existence. Now tell me, where do you come from? Not Baltimore, you're too abrupt; not Philadelphia, you're too alive; not Boston, you're too insouciant. I know; Chicago!"

"Well, that's getting warm," he laughed. "But it isn't especially clever, for I've noticed that when one can't place a person anywhere else they always put him down from either Pittsburg or Chicago."

"Oh, you're not from Pittsburg," she said. "You're too clean. And if it isn't Chicago I give it up. Or, wait; maybe it's San Francisco?"

"Wrong. My present address is Cold Creek Canyon, Colorado."

"Well, you surely can't blame me for not guessing that," she exclaimed. "Do you mean that you live there, that you mine or ranch or—or whatever it is one does in a canyon?"

"Not exactly. You see I'm working for the Denver Northern and Pacific Railway; that's part of the Sypher System, you know, and——"



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"Oh," said Judith. He paused, waiting for her to go on, but she only smiled and looked encouragingly interested.

"Well, I was just going to explain," he continued, "that we're extending the line into Wyoming and that I'm in charge of the work. Just now I'm taking a vacation, the first real one I've had in three years; they keep you rather busy."

"Then you're the chief engineer?" she asked.

"No, Rawlins is the chief; I'm under him. But I'm at the head of the Cold Creek Canyon stunt."

"But you're not exactly a Westerner, are you?"

"Oh, no; I was born in New Jersey, raised in Delaware, and educated in Connecticut. I went to Sheff. After I graduated I got a place with the Sypher System in Denver. That was six years ago. Since then I've been kicking around out there generally. It's good fun," he added, reflectively. And then, after a pause, "And hard work."



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"But it must be fascinating," she exclaimed, "to plan those great bridges and tunnels and things."

"Yes, it is," he acknowledged. "Just at present we're blasting out a trifling little hole of about three quarters of a mile through a mountain."

"Oh, I should love to see it!" she cried. "But I don't see how you dare. Doesn't it seem like taking an awful liberty with the mountain?" Tom laughed.

"You'd think so if you saw us at it. We're raising particular Cain with that little old hill."

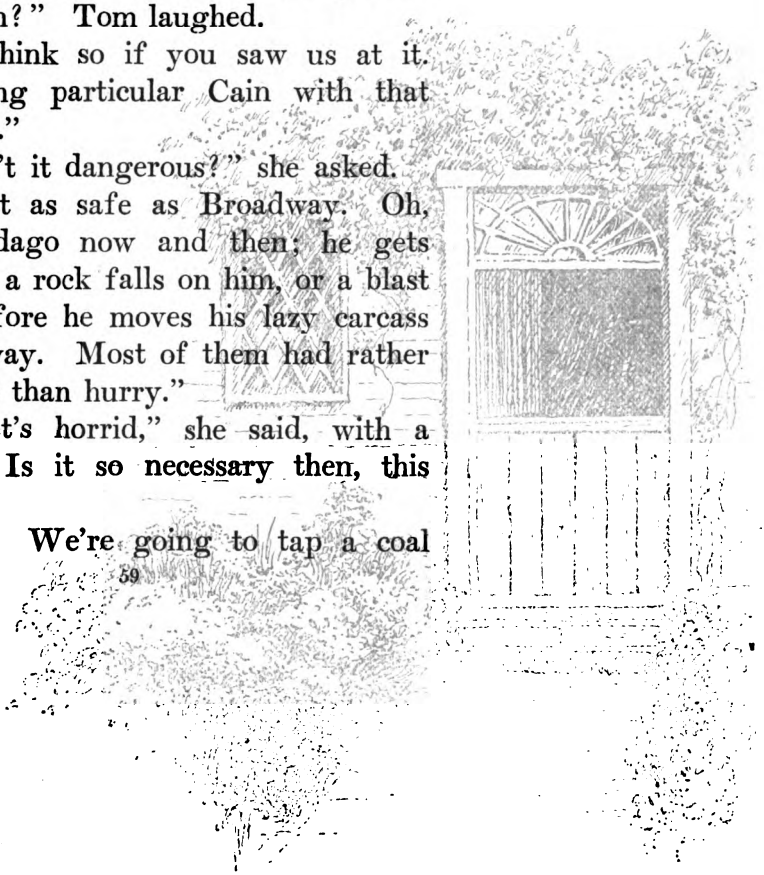
"And isn't it dangerous?" she asked.

"No, just as safe as Broadway. Oh, we lose a dago now and then; he gets drowned, or a rock falls on him, or a blast goes off before he moves his lazy carcass out of the way. Most of them had rather be blown up than hurry."

"But that's horrid," she said, with a shudder. "Is it so necessary then, this railroad?"

"Rather! We're going to tap a coal





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region that—well, there's nothing like it out there."

"I know," murmured Judith, "the Savery Creek District."

"Yes, and there's gold there, too, lots of it. I say, though, how did you know about the Savery Creek District?"

"I suppose—probably I read about it. It's been in the papers, hasn't it?"

"Not that I know of," answered Tom. "Perhaps it has, though."

"Most everything does get into the papers nowadays," observed Judith, oracularly. "I should think it would cost a lot of money, this railroad."

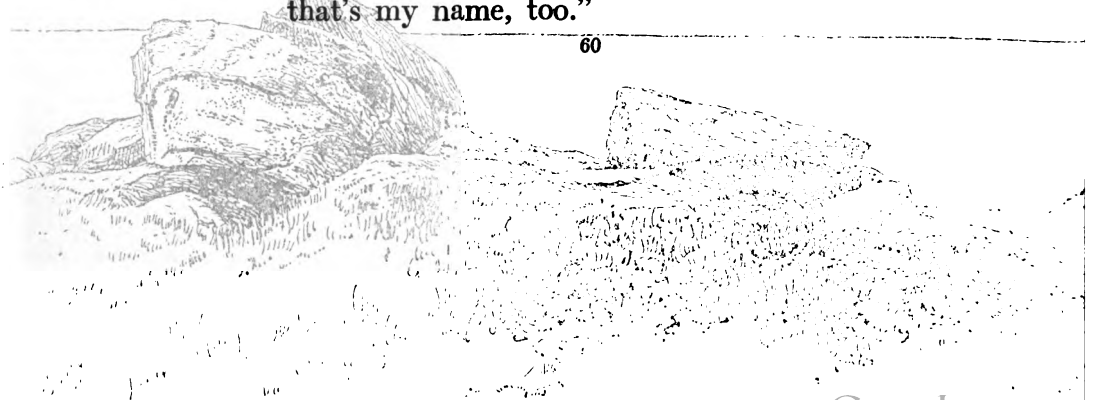
"Heaps! But Judy's got plenty of it, and——"

"I beg your pardon!"

"I said—Oh, Judy? Why, you know, old Sypher died two years ago and the whole outfit went to his daughter. Her name's Judith, and—by the way, that's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes, but you called her Judy, and that's my name, too."





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"I know. We all call her Judy; everybody does, from rodman to chief. It doesn't sound very respectful, I suppose, but we don't mean anything. It's just sort of handy, you see. Besides, the men all like Judy—I mean Miss Sypher. There's a young chap under me, a fellow named Haskins, one of our engineers. When we give him a harder stunt than usual he always shakes his head and says: 'Well, mind now, I wouldn't do this for anyone but Judy!'"

"Oh," said Judith, again. "I don't think I'd like Mr. Haskins."

"Oh, yes, you would," Tom laughed. "Everyone likes Jim."

But Judith shook her head. "I don't," she insisted.

"That's because you don't know him," answered Tom, cheerfully. "There's one thing, though, that the fellows don't approve of. Even Jim says he's disappointed in Judy. They say she's going to marry some foreign count or other. The fellows don't stand for that."

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"Really?" observed Judith, coldly. "Is it any of their business?"

"I suppose not, but naturally they're interested. Jim says——"

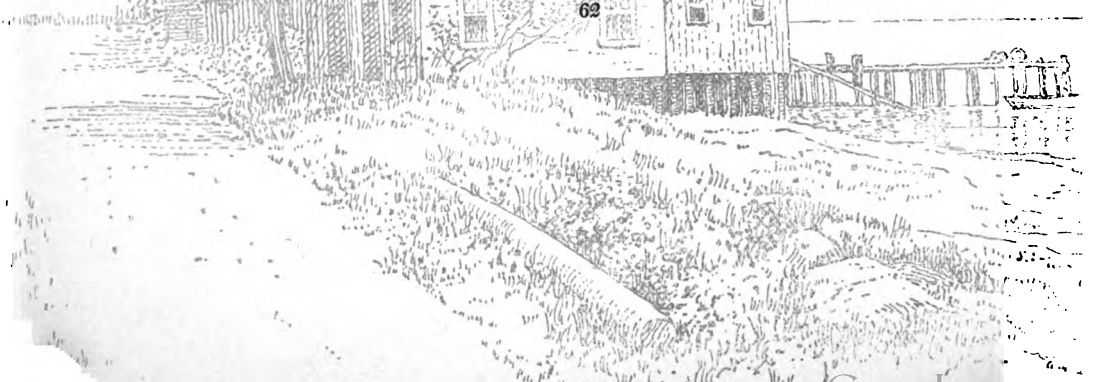
"I don't care to hear what Mr. Haskins says," interrupted Judy. Tom looked puzzled.

"That's funny, what a dislike you've taken to Jim. Well, we'll leave Jim out of it. Funny, though, how our American girls take shines to those queer little foreign freaks with titles, isn't it?"

"Is it?" asked Judith, with elaborate unconcern.

"Don't you think so? Or maybe you've got your eye on a title yourself, Miss Judith?" he laughed. Judith turned her head, fearful that he would notice the little flush which she was trying to stifle. "Now take Judy," continued Tom. "What's she want to go and throw herself away for on a French or Italian count? Aren't there plenty of decent rich young American chaps for her to marry? Great gosh, do you suppose she's silly enough to think





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this dago duke would want to marry her if she didn't have twenty or thirty millions?"

"I don't think you have any right to talk that way," said Judith, warmly. "I don't doubt that Count—whoever he is, needs the money she will bring him; they all do; but isn't it just possible that she may have some attractions of her own?"

"Not enough to cut any ice with his countship," answered Tom, dryly. "I'll bet if she had no money he wouldn't look at her, even if she was as beautiful as they make 'em. Of course Judy isn't a bad-looker, but——"

"Really!"

"Well——"

"Have you ever seen her?"

"Me? Oh, no; but I've seen her picture in the papers lots of times. She isn't a raving beauty exactly, even allowing for newspaper art, but she's nice looking and wholesome looking, with a dandy pair of eyes that look right at you and make you want to—to fight somebody and bring her the head on a meat platter. She's the sort



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of girl you'd like to have for a chum—or a sister."

"Not the sort you'd—care to marry?" questioned Judith, carelessly.

"Marry? Gee!" said Tom. "She could have anyone in our camp at the drop of the handkerchief! I'll bet there isn't a chap who hasn't got a newspaper picture of her stuck up somewhere. And no two of them alike. Why, Jim says——" Tom caught himself up. "I forgot Jim was barred," he apologized.

"What does he say?" asked Judith, tolerantly.

"He says he'd marry Judy in spite of her money if she'd ask him," laughed Tom. "Oh, they're all rather locoed about Judy."

"That means that you are immune?"

"Don't you believe it! I'm right with the bunch!"

"But you wouldn't want to marry her."

"I didn't say so," Tom corrected. "I said I'd like to have her for a chum, because that might be within the possibilities. As I

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couldn't marry her, what's the use of thinking about her that way?"

"Why couldn't you marry her?" pursued Judith, inexorably.

"Why?" Tom laughed, amusedly. "Because my salary is about five thousand a year and I save just enough for insurance premiums. Of course my dad will leave me a bunch of money when he goes, but I guess the interest on that wouldn't keep her in hair ribbons; and, besides, I won't get that for a good many years, I hope."

"But wouldn't this Miss—Sypher, isn't it?—have money enough for both?" asked Judith.

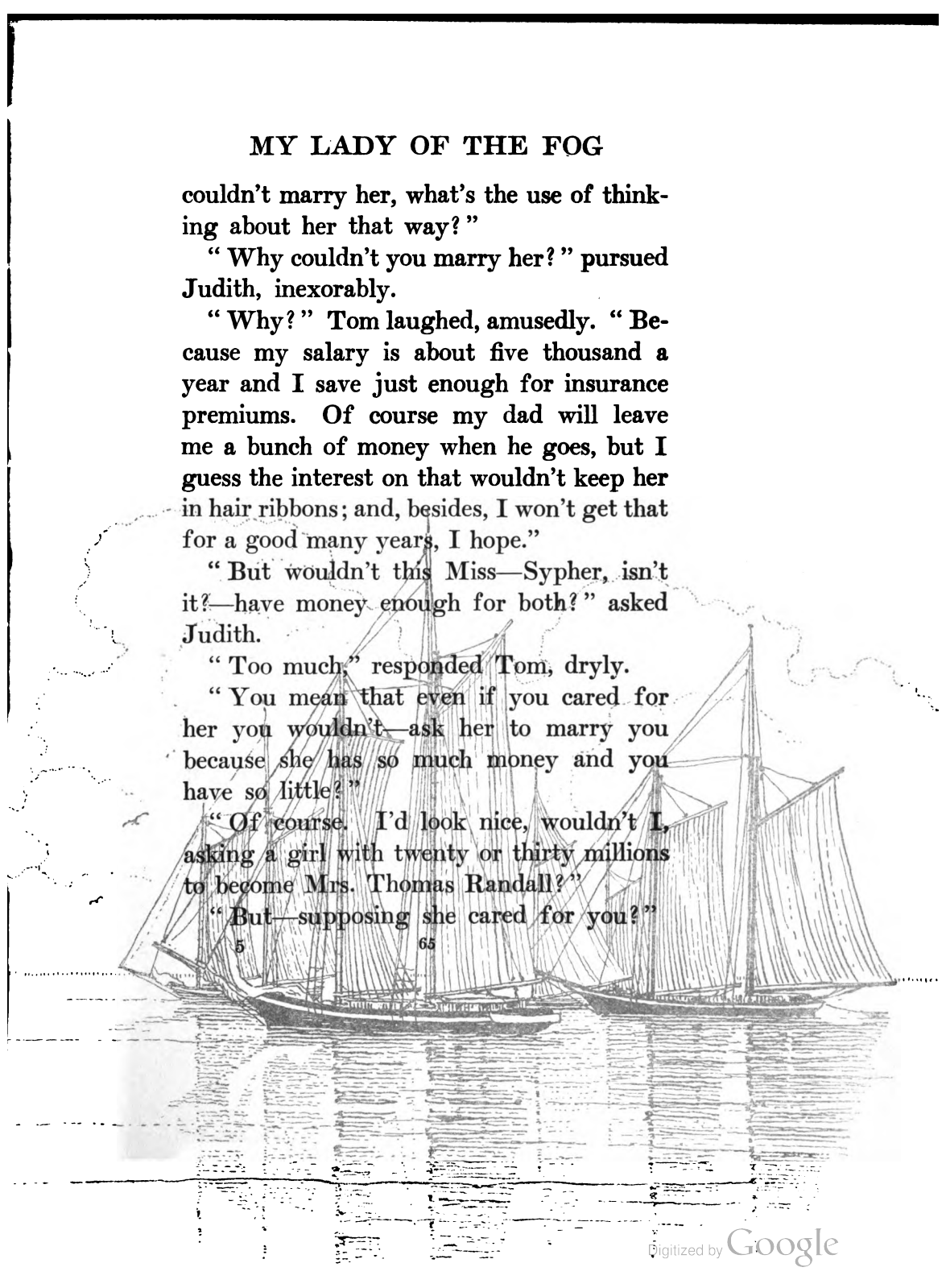
"Too much," responded Tom, dryly.

"You mean that even if you cared for her you wouldn't—ask her to marry you because she has so much money and you have so little?"

"Of course. I'd look nice, wouldn't I, asking a girl with twenty or thirty millions to become Mrs. Thomas Randall?"

"But—supposing she cared for you?"





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"Supposing a mule don't kick," laughed Tom.

"You think that beyond the possibilities?" smiled Judith.

"About a million miles beyond," he replied, cheerfully.

"But just supposing," she urged.

"Well." Tom dropped his gaze to his lean brown hands. "If she did I guess I'd be satisfied," he said, thoughtfully. "I'd hold my head so high after that that my hat would fall off backwards."

"Do you mean that—that you wouldn't——"

"Ask her to marry me? Not in a thousand years—unless I was sure she'd turn me down."

"Then don't you think you are a little hard on her?" challenged Judith. "If every man she knew felt that way about it how many offers of marriage would she be likely to receive?"

"Oh, there are some Johnnies that have money enough to marry her without losing their self-respect," answered Tom.



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"Do you really think there are many marriageable men with twenty millions looking for wives?"

"Well, they wouldn't need to have twenty millions; two or three might do."

"But perhaps she hasn't found a man even with two or three she could care for. Why, then, should you blame her for marrying a foreigner who, whatever you say about him, is frank enough to confess that her money is the main consideration? At least, she is getting something in return."

"What?" he demanded.

"A title."

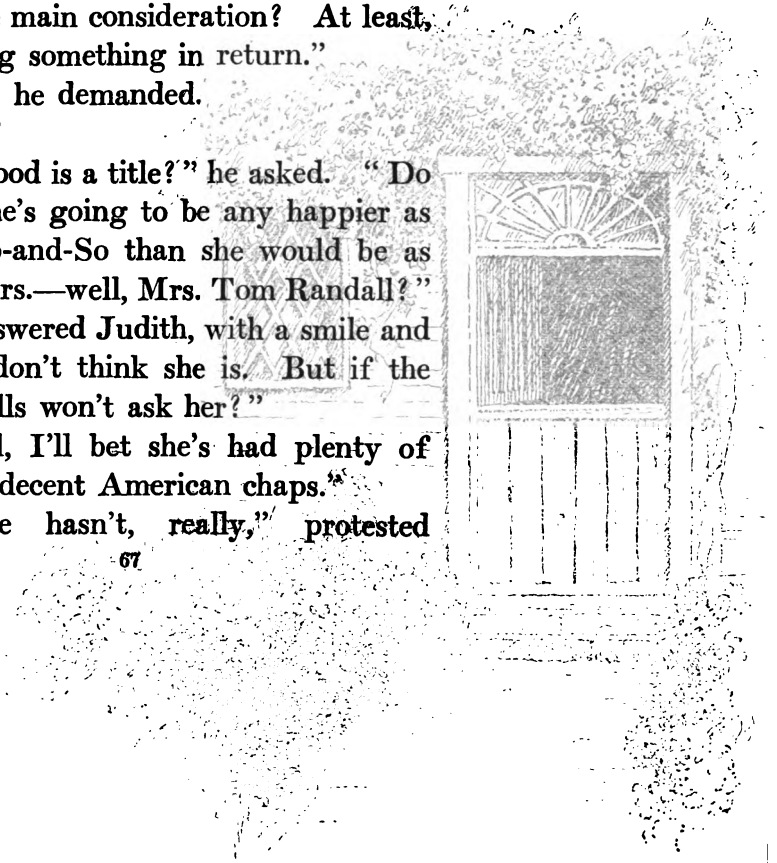
"What good is a title?" he asked. "Do you think she's going to be any happier as Countess So-and-So than she would be as just plain Mrs.—well, Mrs. Tom Randall?"

"No," answered Judith, with a smile and a sigh, "I don't think she is. But if the Tom Randalls won't ask her?"

"Oh, well, I'll bet she's had plenty of offers from decent American chaps."

"But she hasn't, really," protested





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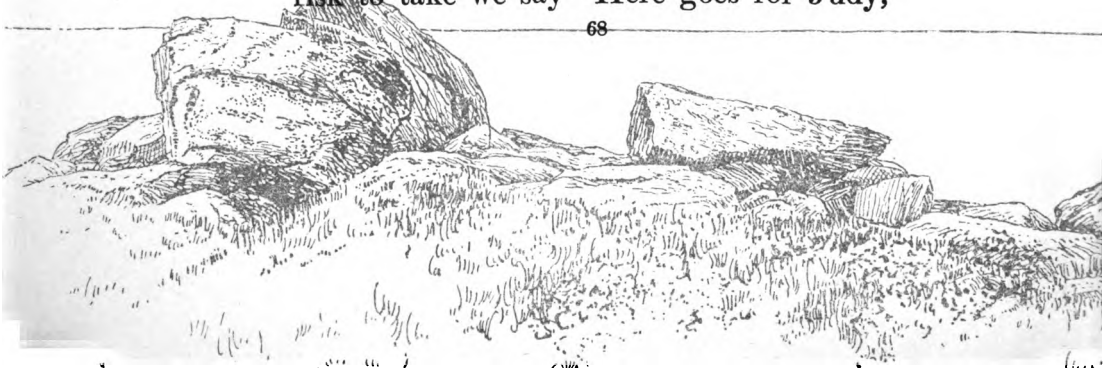
Judith, "not from men she could care for and respect."

"How do you know?"

"I? Oh!" She dropped her eyes. "There's been a good deal about her in the papers, of course; and I've heard people talking, you know."

"Well, we don't like it," Tom reasserted. "I suppose it's none of our business, in a way, but she's our Boss, and that means something. I suppose it will sound silly to you," he went on, hesitatingly, "but I tell you it is jolly nice to be working for somebody like Judy instead of an old money-grabber like her father. Not that old Sypher wasn't a pretty good sort, too, but —well, it's different, don't you see? Why, we don't consider that we're working for the D. N. and P. or the Sypher System; we're working for Judy; and that helps a lot! She might be the sister of any of us, a nice, clean, dandy American girl, just like lots of girls we know back home, and when there's a tough job to tackle or a risk to take we say 'Here goes for Judy,'





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and we go ahead and do it, and—and there you are!" Tom paused and lifted his eyes to Judith's face with a little awkward laugh. "I suppose it sounds like rot to you," he said, "and maybe I haven't made you see just what I mean. I'm not much on the talk."

"I do see what you mean," answered Judith softly. "Do you—do you suppose she knows this, what you've told me?"

"Of course not; why should she? Why, she doesn't even know we're alive! But we don't mind that. We know her. And she means a lot to us, Judy does. You see, there isn't much romance around an engineer's camp, Miss Judith, and so we make the most of what we can find. And so, you see, when we read in the papers that Judy had run across a foreign duke or something over in Vienna last winter and that he was coming over here this summer and that she was going to marry him, we felt rather done. Somehow, if you'll believe it, it seemed to us that Judy ought to have asked our advice! We can't help feeling

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that she's just throwing herself away on this foreign chap."

"But if she's as homely as you say——"

"Homely? Come now, I didn't say that! She isn't homely, not by a jugful! What I meant was that she isn't one of those Grecian goddesses that you read about. She doesn't have to be; she's a heap better; she's—she's—well, she's just a dear, that's what she is! She looks—I say!"

Tom was gazing eagerly at Judith. She met his look placidly, although her heart was beating loudly at the prospect of discovery.

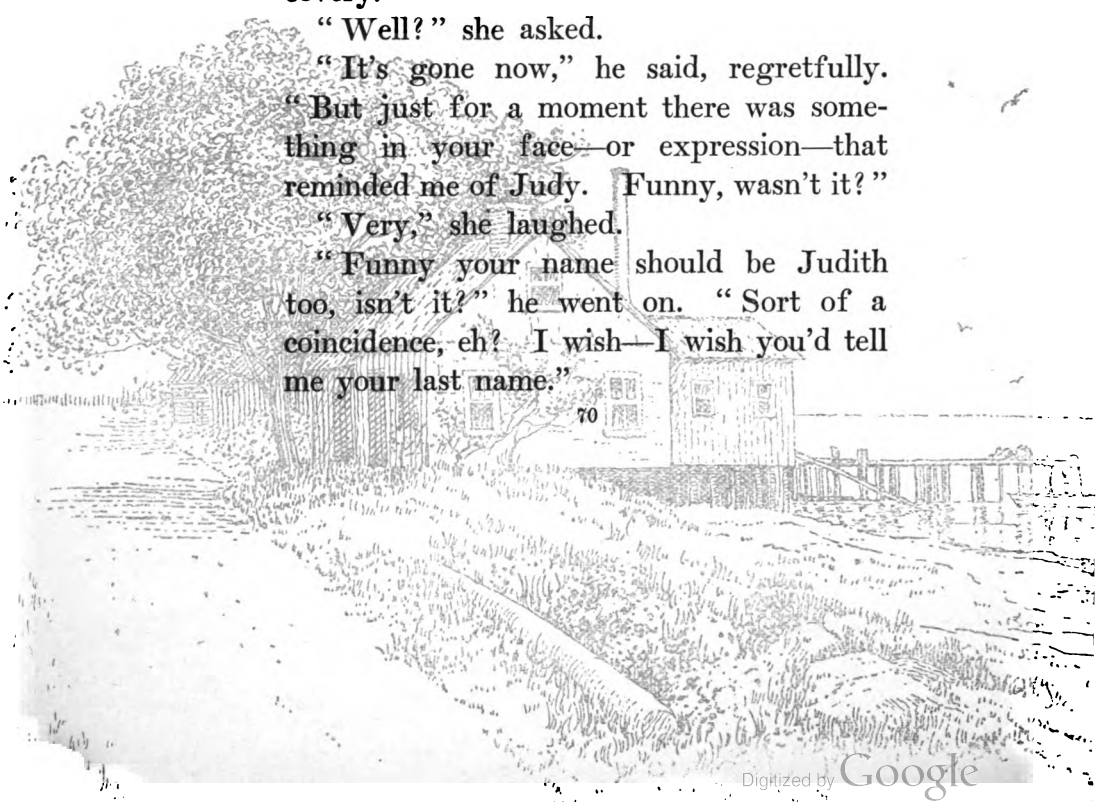
"Well?" she asked.

"It's gone now," he said, regretfully. "But just for a moment there was something in your face—or expression—that reminded me of Judy. Funny, wasn't it?"

"Very," she laughed.

"Funny your name should be Judith too, isn't it?" he went on. "Sort of a coincidence, eh? I wish—I wish you'd tell me your last name."





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"You're forgetting your promise," she answered, mockingly.

"Well, but I was talking with a chap over on the landing and he said that Captain Poggs had a daughter staying with him. Is that you?"

"You agreed not to ask me anything."

"All right, only I'm mighty sure you're no lady's maid," he replied, with decision. "And I don't believe your name is Poggs, and I don't believe you're the Captain's daughter. You might tell me that much."

"Why?"

"Because—oh, well, I'd like to know."

"Idle curiosity," she answered, lightly. "Supposing, instead, you tell me what you are doing in a launch that doesn't belong to you and that you don't know how to run?"

"The launch belongs to a friend of mine, Wharton Ferris. He and I started out on a cruise and he got side-tracked at Gloucester. Met a girl there he knew and went off on an automobile trip with her party. Wanted me to come along, but I didn't



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care to. I said I'd go ahead with the cruise, and so he gave me his blessing and here I am. I'm going back in a week or so to pick him up again. And that reminds me that I came to see if I could get enough gasoline to run back to Greenhaven. I'm plumb out."

"Then you didn't come to apologize, after all?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"No, I didn't. I wanted to, but I wasn't going to. I'm glad the stuff gave out, though." He looked at his watch. "If it hadn't I'd have been at Round Harbor now."

"I'm so sorry," she said, commiseratingly. "You'll be very late, won't you?"

"Terribly," he answered. "I'm not going."

"Really? But I'm told Round Harbor is very charming. You could easily reach it by two o'clock if you started now."

"I don't want to." He smiled across at her. "I say, I wonder if you'd think me awfully cheeky if I said something."

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"WHAT I WANT TO DO IS TO STAY RIGHT HERE IN GREENHAVEN AND SEE YOU NOW AND THEN"

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"How can I tell until I hear it?" she asked, demurely.

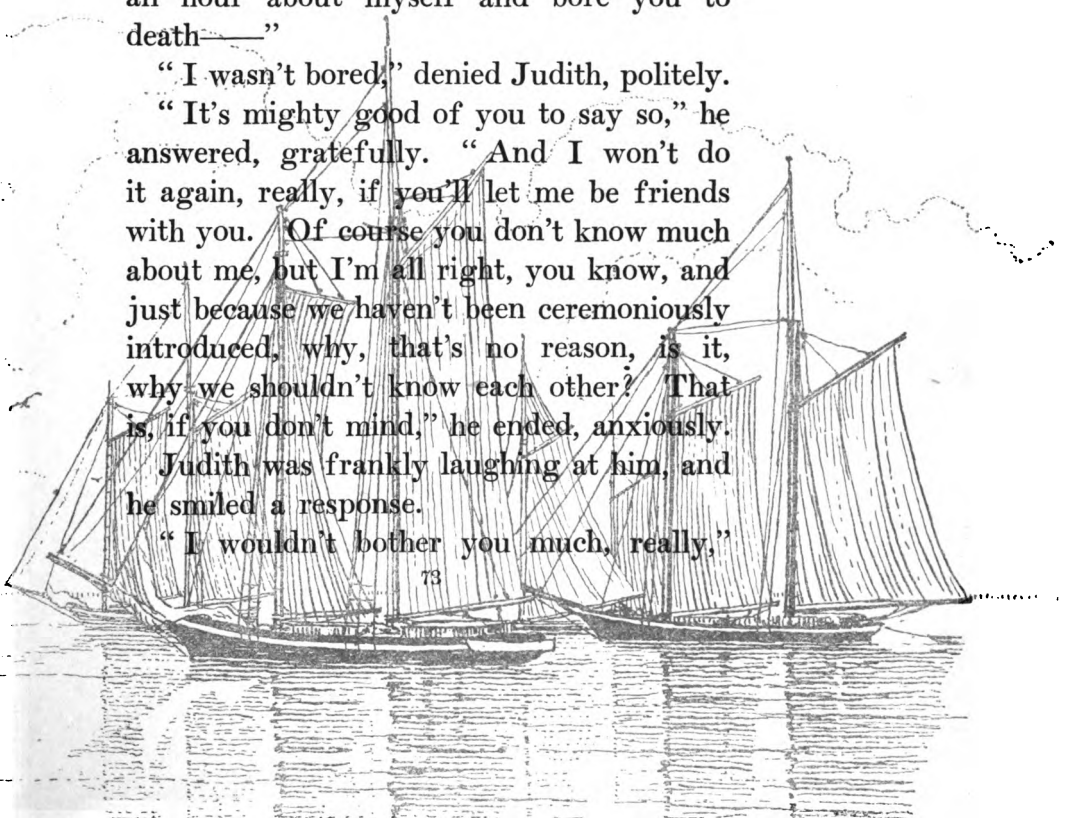
"Well, then, Miss Judith, what I want to do is to stay right here in Greenhaven and see you now and then. I haven't got a blessed thing to do, and a whole fortnight to do it in, and I don't know any people around here. And you've been awfully decent to me; let me rattle on for an hour about myself and bore you to death——"

"I wasn't bored," denied Judith, politely.

"It's mighty good of you to say so," he answered, gratefully. "And I won't do it again, really, if you'll let me be friends with you. Of course you don't know much about me, but I'm all right, you know, and just because we haven't been ceremoniously introduced, why, that's no reason, is it, why we shouldn't know each other? That is, if you don't mind," he ended, anxiously.

Judith was frankly laughing at him, and he smiled a response.

"I wouldn't bother you much, really,"





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said Tom. "If you'd just let me come over and talk with you now and then——"

"Wouldn't it be—a little irregular?" asked Judith, her eyes dancing merrily.

"I don't see it," he objected. "Or, I tell you what I'll do, I'll scrape acquaintance with the Captain and get him to introduce me to you. What do you say?"

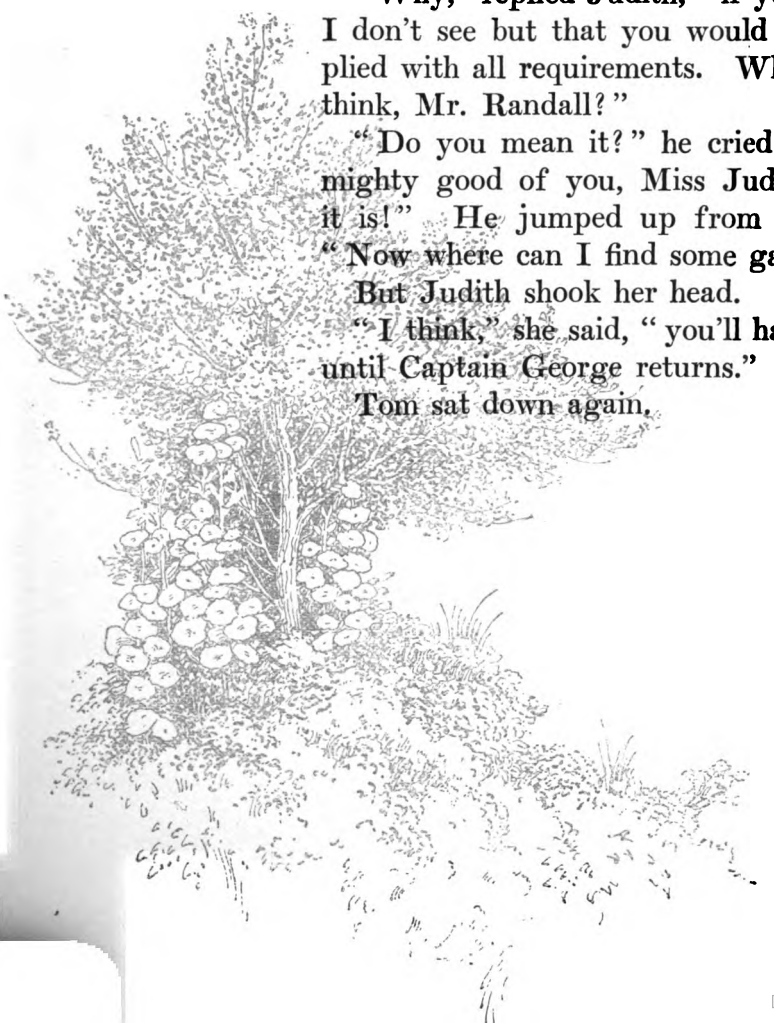
"Why," replied Judith, "if you did that I don't see but that you would have complied with all requirements. What do you think, Mr. Randall?"

"Do you mean it?" he cried. "That's mighty good of you, Miss Judith, honest it is!" He jumped up from the bench. "Now where can I find some gasoline?"

But Judith shook her head.

"I think," she said, "you'll have to wait until Captain George returns."

Tom sat down again.



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## V.

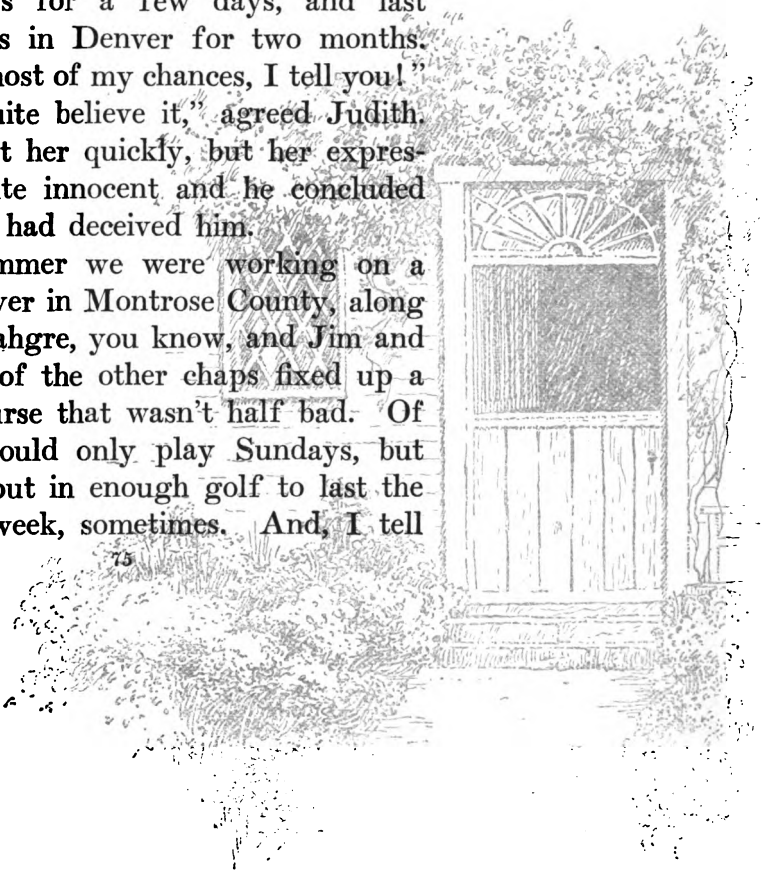
For awhile the talk became more impersonal, of Greenhaven and the country beyond, of the hotel and the golf links behind it. They both played golf, they discovered, Judith, if she was to be believed, very badly.

"I don't get much chance to play," Tom explained. "Now and then I get to Colorado Springs for a few days, and last winter I was in Denver for two months. I make the most of my chances, I tell you!"

"I can quite believe it," agreed Judith. He looked at her quickly, but her expression was quite innocent and he concluded that his ears had deceived him.

"Last summer we were working on a new grade over in Montrose County, along the Uncompahgre, you know, and Jim and I and some of the other chaps fixed up a nine-hole course that wasn't half bad. Of course, we could only play Sundays, but we used to put in enough golf to last the rest of the week, sometimes. And, I tell





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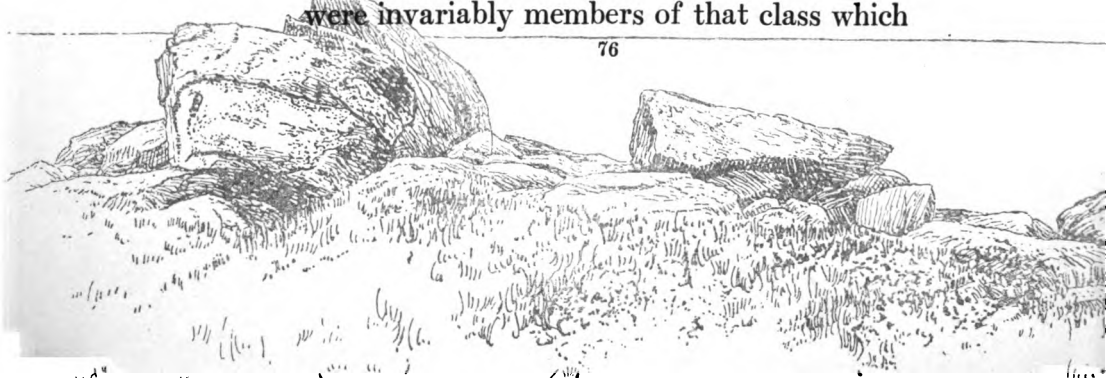
you, Miss Judith, a fellow has to be a good deal of a golf crank to want to play on Sunday after six days of hard labor. We had a foreman named Dolan with us, a funny little Irishman. He was watching Jim one day. Jim isn't a great player, but he's daffy about the game. This time Jim's ball had lodged back of a bunch of sagebrush and Jim was just laying himself out with an iron. Dolan watched awhile —and listened, too, for Jim's fairly expressive at such times—and then when Jim had just about dug that sagebrush up by the roots he laid his hand on Jim's shoulder soothingly.

"'Aisy, now, aisy, Mr. Haskins,' he said. 'Sure, this is no place for you with that iligant swing. You're just wastin' your talent, sir! Come along down to the cut!'"

They talked about their colleges, too; Tom of "Sheff" and Judith of Smith; and soon found that they had one or two acquaintances in common. Tom observed that Judith's friends of whom she spoke were invariably members of that class which





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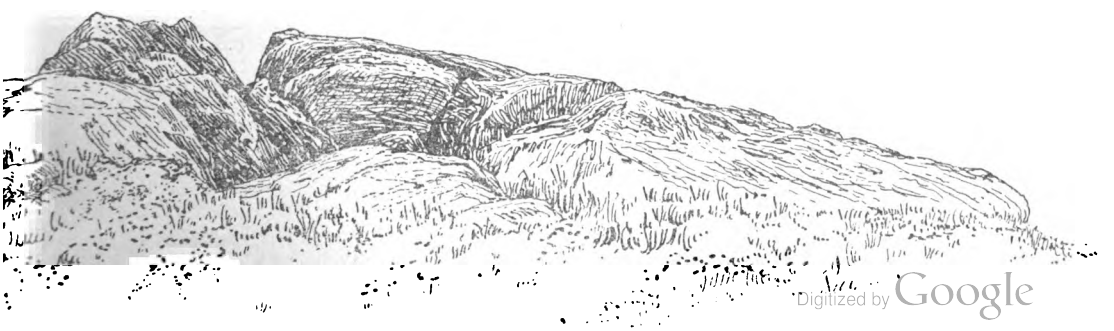
Jim would have referred to as "howling swells." And Tom's curiosity as to her identity grew apace. But she gave him few clues. Besides the facts that she was acquainted with certain persons, some of whom Tom had heard of, one or two of whom he had met, and that she lived in New York, he knew nothing of her. She made no mention of her family, and his one or two elaborately unconcerned questions brought no results.

But if he didn't succeed in discovering who she was he made other discoveries, all of which appeared to him highly important and vastly interesting. She had been abroad four times; she called it "going over"; she had seen things that he had seen during his single, memorable visit to Europe, and liked many things that he had liked. They compared impressions of this place and that, matched experiences with Continental hotel and railway accommodations, and recounted their adventures. Once, Tom learned, Judith had been over with "a party"; on another occasion with





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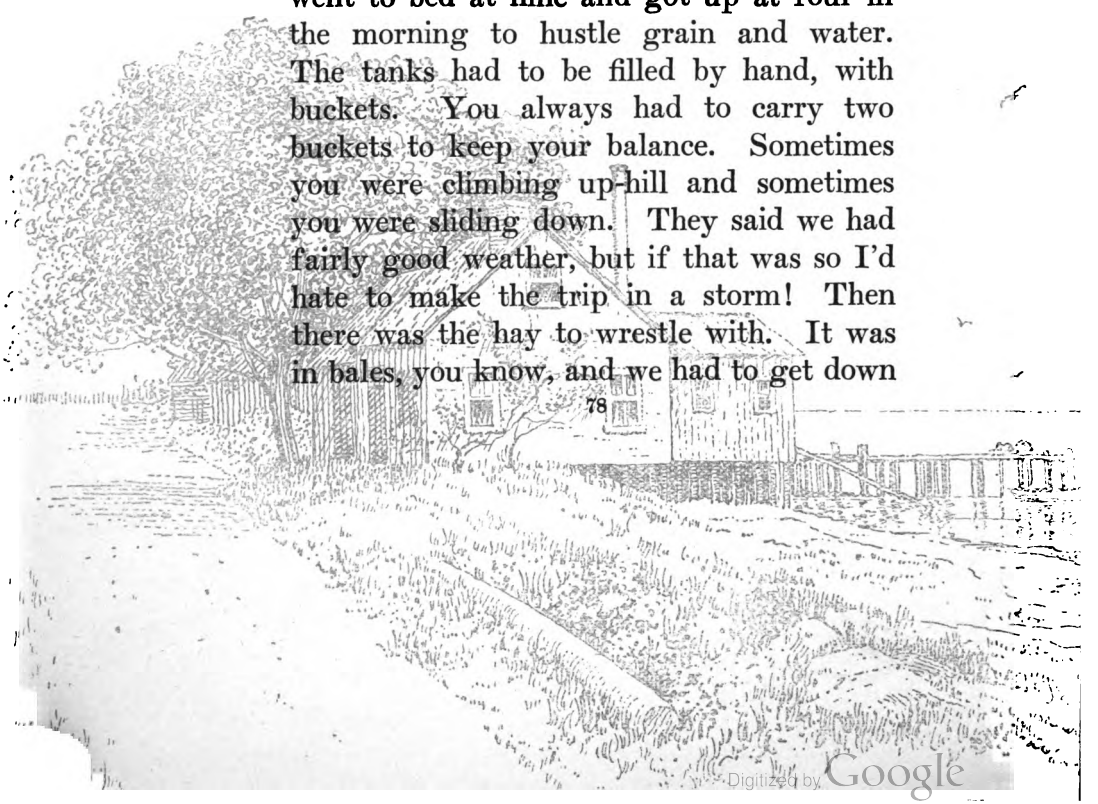
"the folks"; again with "Aunt Norma." Nothing very enlightening there.

Tom's single trip over had been made in a cattle-ship a few weeks after his graduation. "There were six of us," he said, "all Sheff fellows. Some of us couldn't have gone any other way, you know. It was beastly hard work, but, looking back at it, it seems rather good fun. We toiled like niggers, and lived like 'em, too. The steamer was a tramp and an awful old tub, and we were nineteen days from New York to Gravesend. I was sick the first five days. Oh, it was a merry jaunt! We went to bed at nine and got up at four in the morning to hustle grain and water. The tanks had to be filled by hand, with buckets. You always had to carry two buckets to keep your balance. Sometimes you were climbing up-hill and sometimes you were sliding down. They said we had fairly good weather, but if that was so I'd hate to make the trip in a storm! Then there was the hay to wrestle with. It was in bales, you know, and we had to get down





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in the hold and jerk those bales over under the hatch and sling 'em up with the tackle. You can imagine what it was like to get those out when the old tub was rolling and you couldn't get decent foothold on the slippery stuff! And the food they gave us! Good Lord, it makes me ill to think of it! We had bread only twice a week."

"How awful!" said Judith with a shudder. "And you were sick, too!"

"Beastly. So were most of us. I used to do my stunt and then just fall over and try to forget things. But afterwards it wasn't so bad; after I got well, I mean. And the fellows were a dandy lot."

"Was Mr.—Haskins there?" Judith asked.

"Yes, Jim was there. I don't know what the rest of us would have done without Jim. He was the only one of us that never got down in the mouth and discouraged. When the food was worse than usual—and it generally was—Jim would get pencil and paper and draw up the menu

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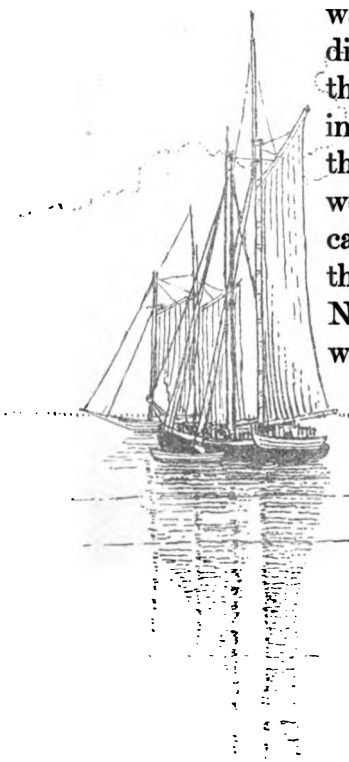
of our first dinner after we landed. That usually made us forget our troubles."

"I think I like Mr. Haskins a little better," said Judith, with a soft laugh.

"Jim's a real man, in spite of his size," said Tom.

"And that first dinner—was it nice?"

"Nice! It was heavenly!" sighed Tom. "I don't believe I shall ever have another dinner taste the way that did! It was worth all we'd been through, I tell you, Miss Judith. But," he added, with a grin, "it looked for awhile as though we weren't going to get it. You see we docked pretty well down the river and the nearest hotel was a little two-by-twice affair kept by a dirty little Cockney. I was treasurer for the crowd and all our funds were tied up in a draft on an express company. Well, this inn was one of the places where you were supposed to be able to get that draft cashed. So I went up there to arrange things. I hadn't had a shave since I left New York and I was in the things I'd worn on the ship. I guess I was a pretty





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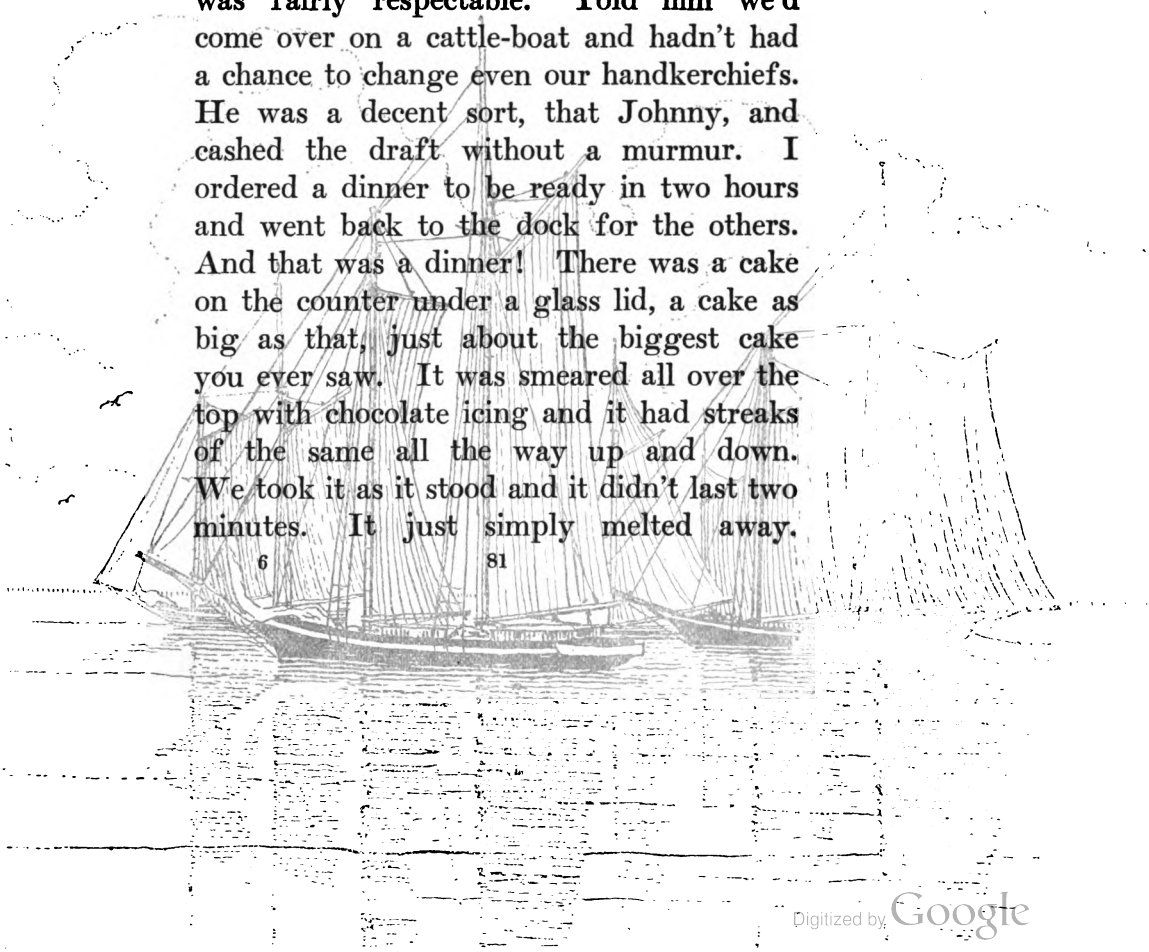
tough looking proposition," he laughed. "Anyhow, mine host viewed me with deep suspicion, looked that draft all over and gave it back to me. He wouldn't cash it. Well, I got mad and lit into him. But it didn't do any good. The next place was a mile further on up the river, in another village, and I tramped it.

"This time I told the fellow all about it. Said that in spite of appearances I was fairly respectable. Told him we'd come over on a cattle-boat and hadn't had a chance to change even our handkerchiefs. He was a decent sort, that Johnny, and cashed the draft without a murmur. I ordered a dinner to be ready in two hours and went back to the dock for the others. And that was a dinner! There was a cake on the counter under a glass lid, a cake as big as that, just about the biggest cake you ever saw. It was smeared all over the top with chocolate icing and it had streaks of the same all the way up and down. We took it as it stood and it didn't last two minutes. It just simply melted away.





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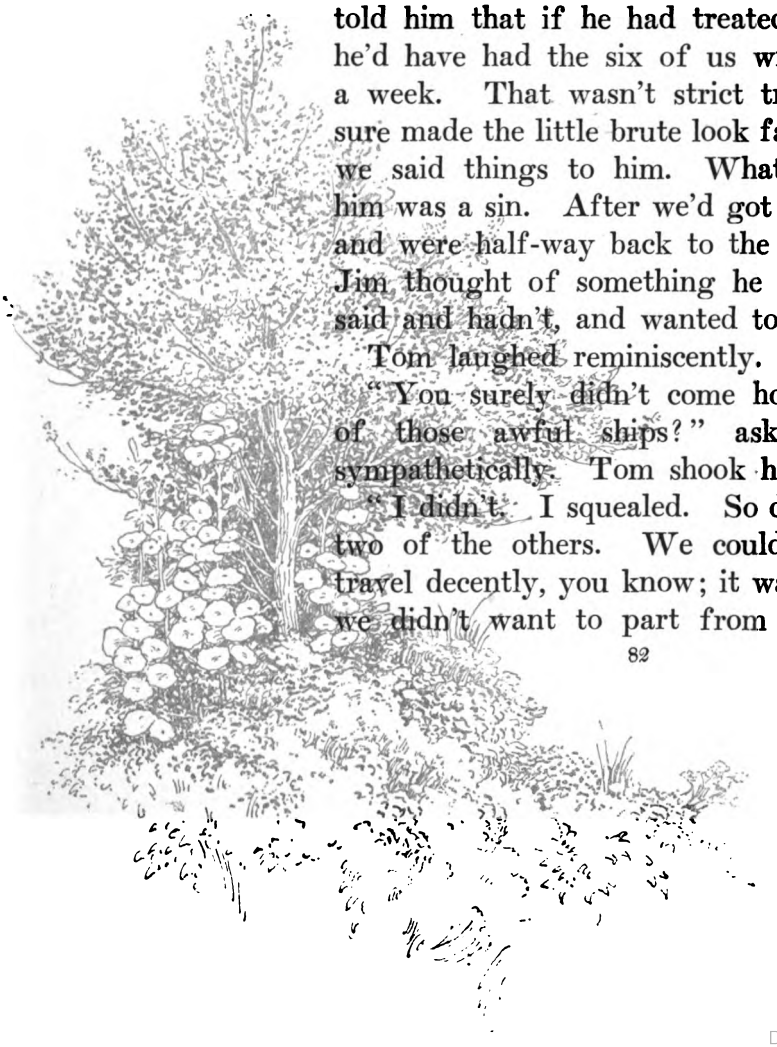
We couldn't get enough bread and cake and pastry; we were like sponges. After dinner we went back to that other inn, where the chap wouldn't cash the draft, you know. And we laid all the money we had on top of the counter and spread it out so that it looked about like a million dollars to that little Cockney. And we told him that if he had treated us decent he'd have had the six of us with him for a week. That wasn't strict truth, but it sure made the little brute look faint. Then we said things to him. What we called him was a sin. After we'd got all through and were half-way back to the other place Jim thought of something he might have said and hadn't, and wanted to go back!"

Tom laughed reminiscently.

"You surely didn't come home on one of those awful ships?" asked Judith, sympathetically. Tom shook his head.

"I didn't, I squealed. So did Jim and two of the others. We could afford to travel decently, you know; it was just that we didn't want to part from the others.





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CAPTAIN GEORGE

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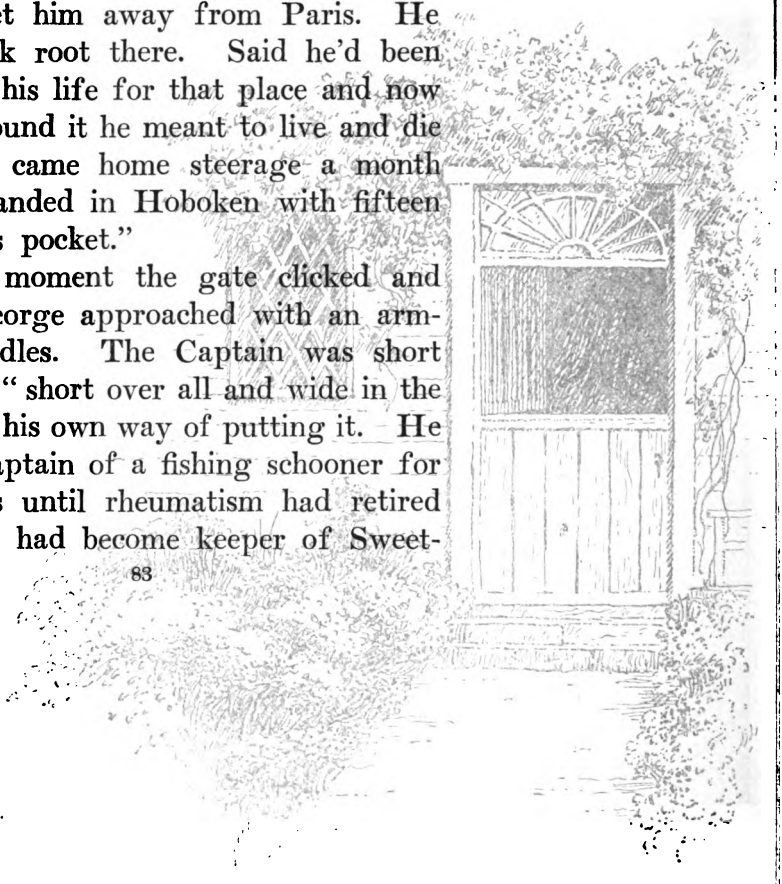
They give you your transportation back, but we'd have had to go to Southampton to get our ship and it would have landed us in Montreal. And although we wouldn't have had to do any work we'd have had the same stuff to eat and the same dirty bunks to sleep in. No, we squealed, the four of us. We kept together for awhile and then cut loose from each other. Jim and I meant to do the whole trip together, but I couldn't get him away from Paris. He sort of took root there. Said he'd been looking all his life for that place and now that he'd found it he meant to live and die there. He came home steerage a month later and landed in Hoboken with fifteen cents in his pocket."

At that moment the gate clicked and Captain George approached with an armful of bundles. The Captain was short and broad; "short over all and wide in the beam," was his own way of putting it. He had been captain of a fishing schooner for many years until rheumatism had retired him and he had become keeper of Sweet-





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water Island Light. Wind and weather had seasoned the Captain's face to the color of old mahogany, and had bleached his scanty locks until they looked like flax. A pair of mirthful pale blue eyes twinkled merrily as he pounded up the path in his big boots.

"Letters for you, Miss——"

"Oh, thank you, Captain," cried Judith, quickly, rising from the bench. "And have you a silk dress for me in one of those packages?"

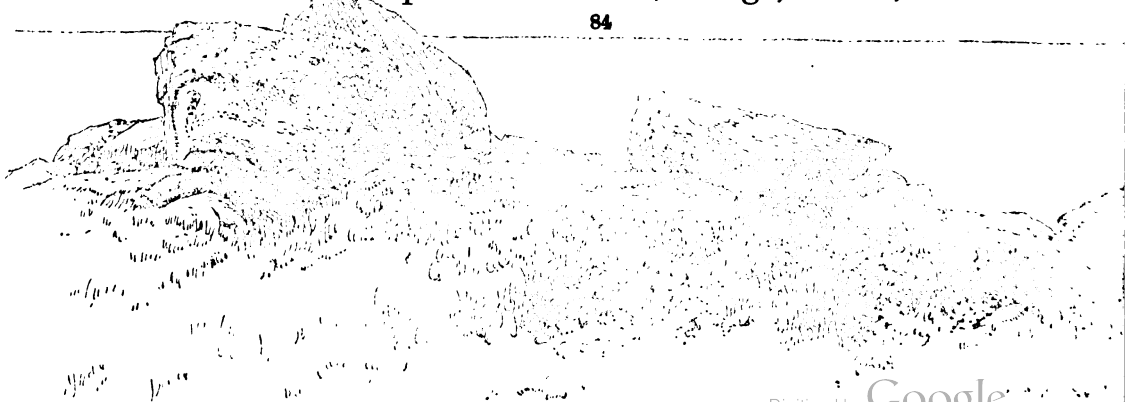
The Captain laid his purchases on the bench with a chuckle.

"To think I forgot that!" he said, with a shake of his head. "I'll have to go right back, Miss——"

"Captain," interrupted Judith, again, "this is Mr. Randall. Mr. Randall is the gentleman who wasted so much of his valuable time yesterday in rescuing me in mid-ocean."

"I want to know," said the Captain, enveloping one of Tom's hands in a massive brown paw. "I cal'late, though, ma'am,





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you ain't heard Mr. Randall regrettin' any waste of time!"

"Oh, he's quite polite about it," she replied, gravely. "He came across this morning to find out whether I had recovered from the experience. And when he got here he found that he was out of gasoline."

"I see his boat down there," said the Captain. "A trim-lookin' craft she is, too. Well, I cal'late I can let you have enough gasoline to take you back, sir. I'm sorry I wasn't to home. But if you'd just asked Dixon——"

"How stupid of me," Judith murmured. "I quite forgot Mr. Dixon." Tom glanced at her gratefully, but she was looking at the letters which the Captain had brought.

"I'll just take these things inside to Marthy," said Captain George. "Then I'll find that gasoline for you, Mr. Randall."

Tom murmured his thanks as the Captain gathered up his bundles and stumped his way into the house.

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"And I shall read my letters," said Judith. "Good-bye, Mr. Randall. I hope you'll have a pleasant run to Round Harbor. It's a lovely day."

"But I'm not going to Round Harbor!" exclaimed Tom, reproachfully.

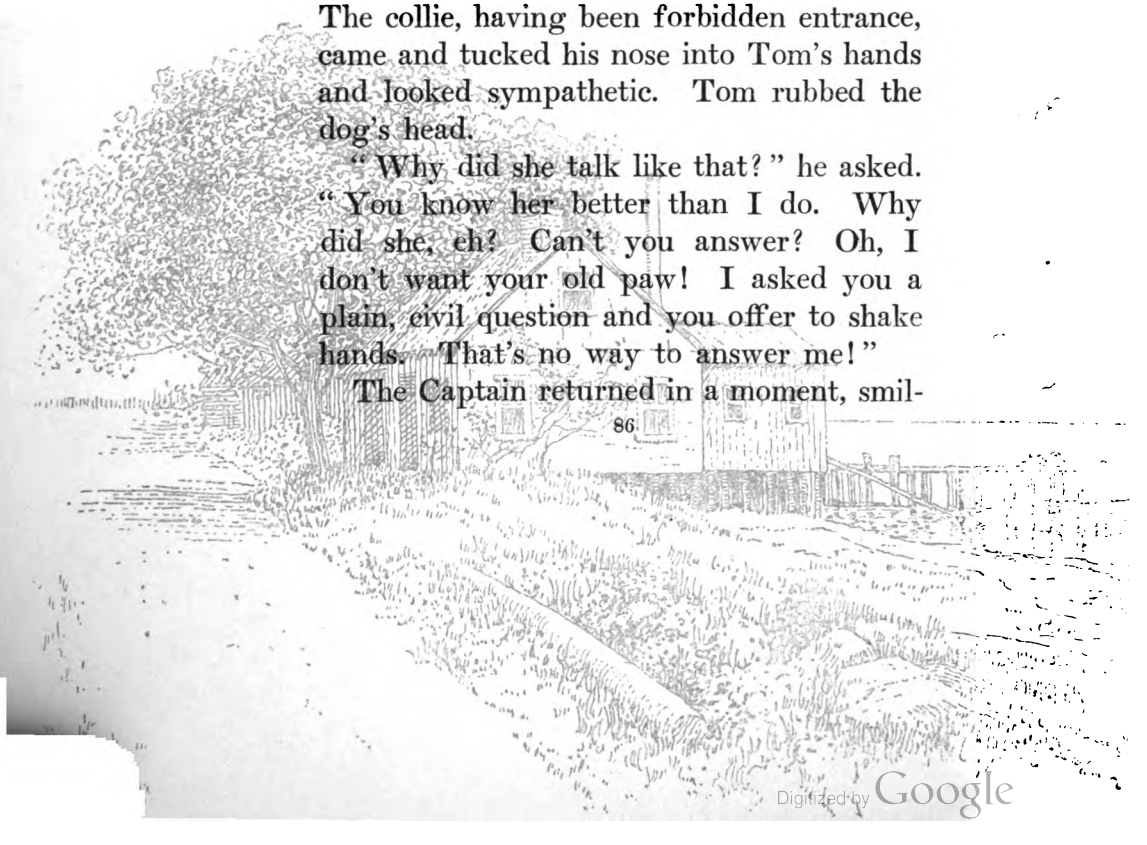
"Of course not; how stupid of me to forget," she replied, lightly. "Then perhaps we shall see each other again some day. Good-morning."

"Good-morning," said Tom, dejectedly. He watched her enter the cottage in the track of the Captain and then sat down again rather disconsolately on the bench. The collie, having been forbidden entrance, came and tucked his nose into Tom's hands and looked sympathetic. Tom rubbed the dog's head.

"Why did she talk like that?" he asked. "You know her better than I do. Why did she, eh? Can't you answer? Oh, I don't want your old paw! I asked you a plain, civil question and you offer to shake hands. That's no way to answer me!"

The Captain returned in a moment, smil-





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ing broadly as though some one had confided an excellent joke to him, and led the way to the storeroom in the lighthouse. There he filled a gallon can with gasoline from one of the reservoirs, Tom watching silently. But on the way down to the landing Tom's curiosity got the better of him.

"I suppose Miss—Miss——" He paused, questioningly. The Captain turned his mild blue eyes upon him.

"Miss Judith, you mean?" he asked, guilelessly.

"Miss Judith, yes," answered Tom. "Though I suppose she has another name, Captain?"

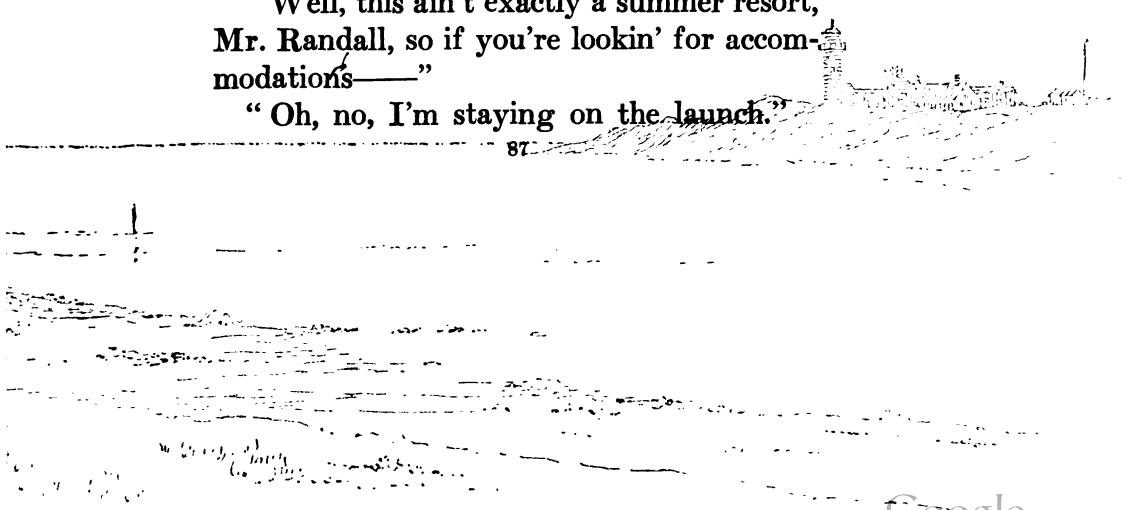
"Not on this island, she ain't," said the Captain, as they embarked in the tender. "What was it you was going to ask, sir?"

"I—I was going to say that I supposed she was just boarding here with you, Captain."

"Well, this ain't exactly a summer resort, Mr. Randall, so if you're lookin' for accommodations——"

"Oh, no, I'm staying on the launch."





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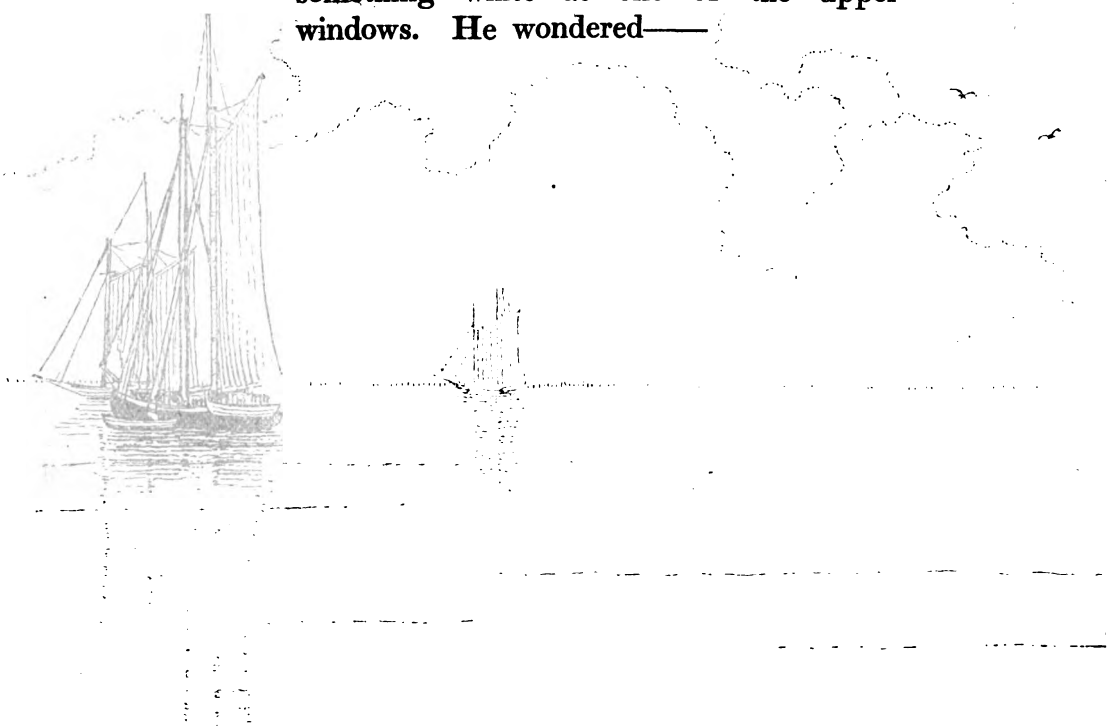
"I see. Pretty comfortable quarters, too, I cal'late. Now if you'll just get the cover off your tank I'll run this in for you."

When the operation was over Tom proffered payment. But the Captain shook his head.

"That's Government gasoline, sir, and I cal'late Uncle Sam'll stand the loss. It's my duty to give aid to disabled mariners, Mr. Randall," chuckled the Captain, "and I guess you come under that headin'."

Tom landed the Captain and returned to the *Vagrant*. As the launch moved away he glanced back at the cottage. There was something white at one of the upper windows. He wondered——



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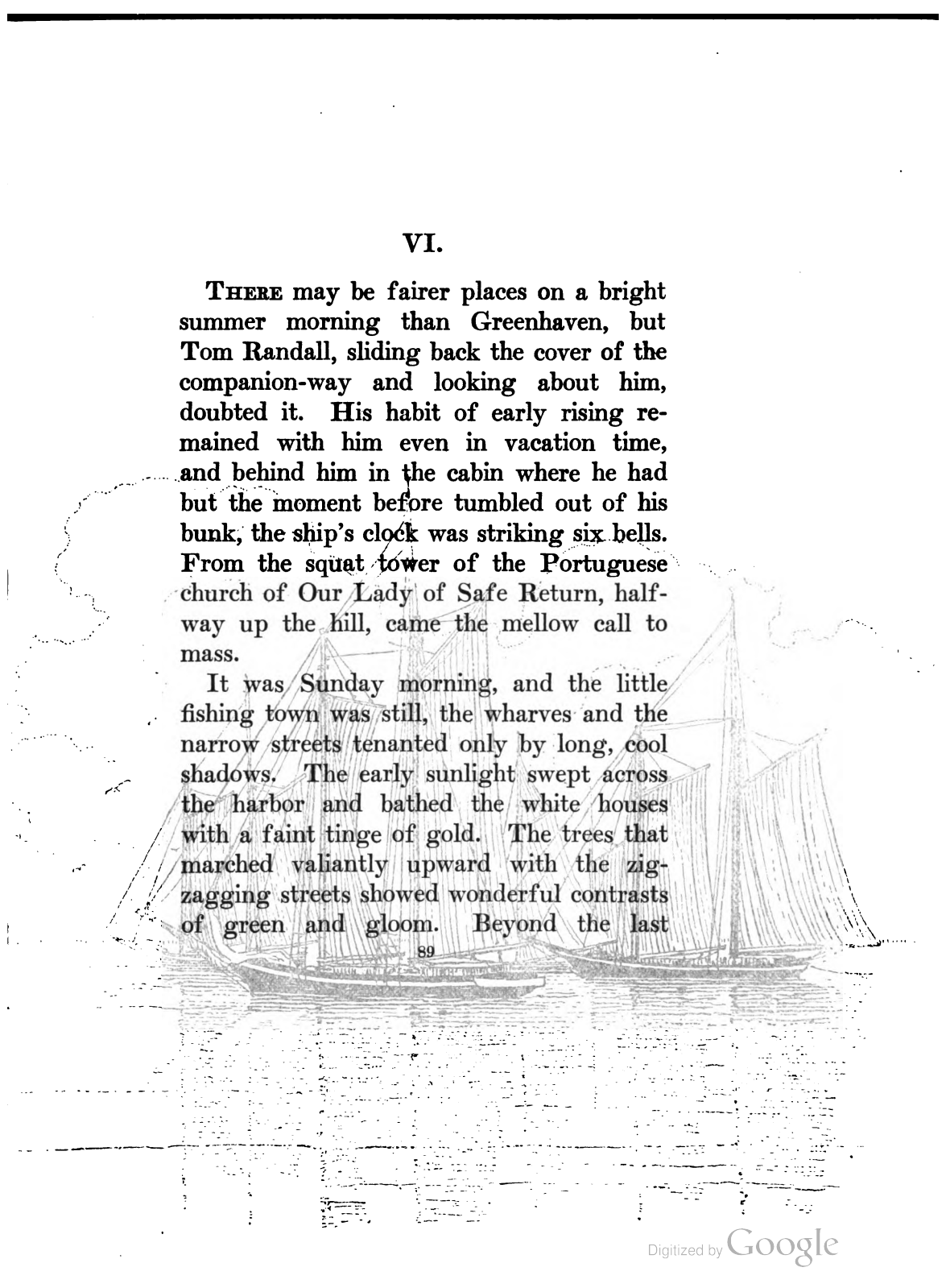
## VI.

THERE may be fairer places on a bright summer morning than Greenhaven, but Tom Randall, sliding back the cover of the companion-way and looking about him, doubted it. His habit of early rising remained with him even in vacation time, and behind him in the cabin where he had but the moment before tumbled out of his bunk, the ship's clock was striking six bells. From the squat tower of the Portuguese church of Our Lady of Safe Return, halfway up the hill, came the mellow call to mass.

It was Sunday morning, and the little fishing town was still, the wharves and the narrow streets tenanted only by long, cool shadows. The early sunlight swept across the harbor and bathed the white houses with a faint tinge of gold. The trees that marched valiantly upward with the zigzagging streets showed wonderful contrasts of green and gloom. Beyond the last





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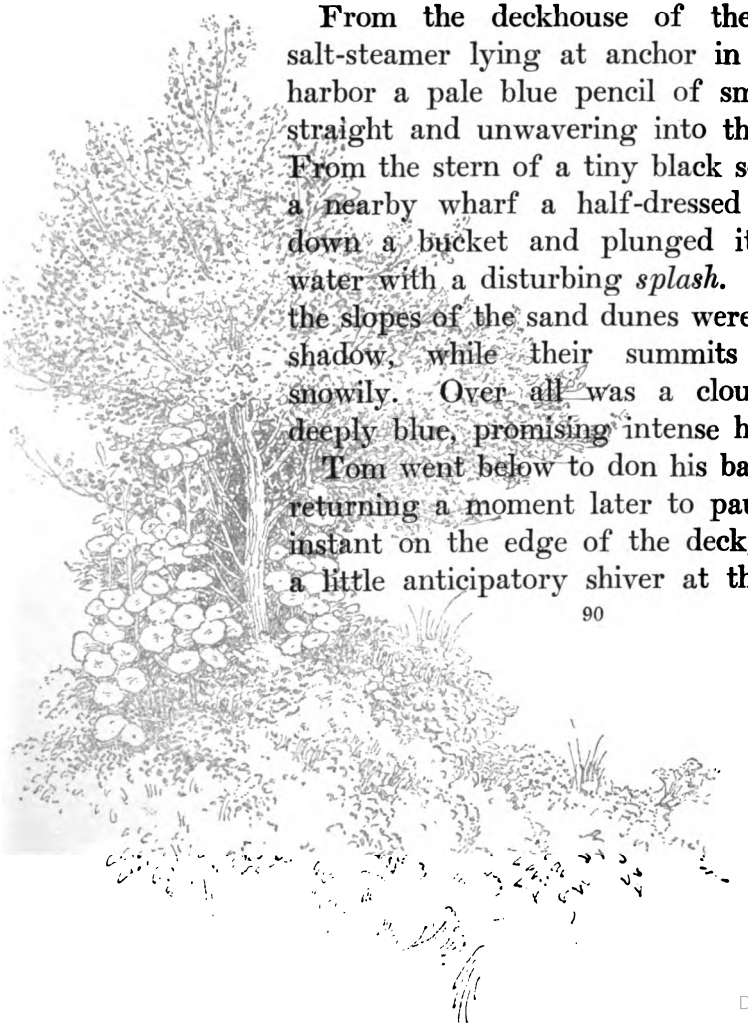
scrambling thoroughfare they joined ranks and bade defiance to the straggling houses, forming a belt of forest against which the towers of the churches and the town hall stood in bold relief. The summit of the hill was a distant wind-swept common of turf and low bushes, with here and there a low ledge of pink granite outcropping to blush rosily in the sunlight.

From the deckhouse of the battered salt-steamer lying at anchor in the outer harbor a pale blue pencil of smoke arose straight and unwavering into the still air. From the stern of a tiny black schooner at a nearby wharf a half-dressed sailor let down a bucket and plunged it into the water with a disturbing *splash*. Eastward the slopes of the sand dunes were in purple shadow, while their summits glistened snowily. Over all was a cloudless sky, deeply blue, promising intense heat.

Tom went below to don his bathing suit, returning a moment later to pause for an instant on the edge of the deck, enjoying a little anticipatory shiver at the thought





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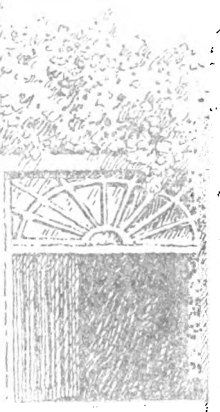
of the cold plunge. Then he threw his hands above his head and dived far down into the green depths, emerging to climb back to the launch with his skin pink and tingling. The man on the *Frank and Emma* paused, bucket in hand, and watched him with vague, expressionless face.

Another dive and Tom came to the surface far out and buried his face in the chill water as he shot legs and arms out in the racing stroke and swam quickly toward a big schooner anchored in the channel. When he reached her his body was in a glow of warmth and exhilaration. He rested a minute, his weight on the anchor cable, and watched the green shadow of the boat dance on the sunlit surface of the water. Then he went leisurely back to the *Vagrant,* and dried and dressed himself. Afterwards he cooked his breakfast on the tiny oil-stove; coffee and bacon and a poached egg; and ate it outside in the cockpit with the best appetite in the world. Then, stretching himself luxuriously, he put his feet up on the opposite chair and





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lighted his pipe. The church bells began again. The sun crept higher in the sky and the warmth of the day began to make itself felt. Tom fixed the awning and, under its shade, went back to his pipe and his thoughts.

His thoughts were distinctly pleasant, just the sort of thoughts for a morning like this. He realized that he was rapidly falling in love with the girl on Sweetwater Island; if he wasn't already in love with her! And he was inclined to think that he was! At all events, he couldn't remember ever feeling about a girl as he felt about her. His love episodes had been few and brief. Since his college days he had been too busy to form attachments, and Jim Haskins, who corresponded with at least a half-dozen girls in various parts of the country, called him a "grouchy old bachelor," which, considering that he was still short of thirty, was a trifle premature. So far his profession—and Tom believed that there was no finer one—had satisfied him. To-day he wondered whether there might



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not be in every man's life room for something besides his labor. Jim declared that a man who wasn't in love with at least one girl wasn't living his life. Jim was a confessed sentimentalist, but it seemed to-day that he was capable of displaying a glimmer of sense now and then.

Granting that he was in love—or would be by the time of his next meeting with Judith—it behooved him to consider matrimony in a practical way. So Tom relighted his pipe, which had gone out unobserved, and faced the situation. He had never saved any money because it had never seemed necessary, but with a decent incentive he saw no reason why he shouldn't. His salary wasn't large, but he might expect a raise at any time and would surely get one if he married. He knew plenty of fellows out West who were maintaining good-sized families with every indication of comfort on incomes no larger than his. Of course, when a fellow married he settled down; he did without a whole lot of things that weren't really necessary; he cut out the

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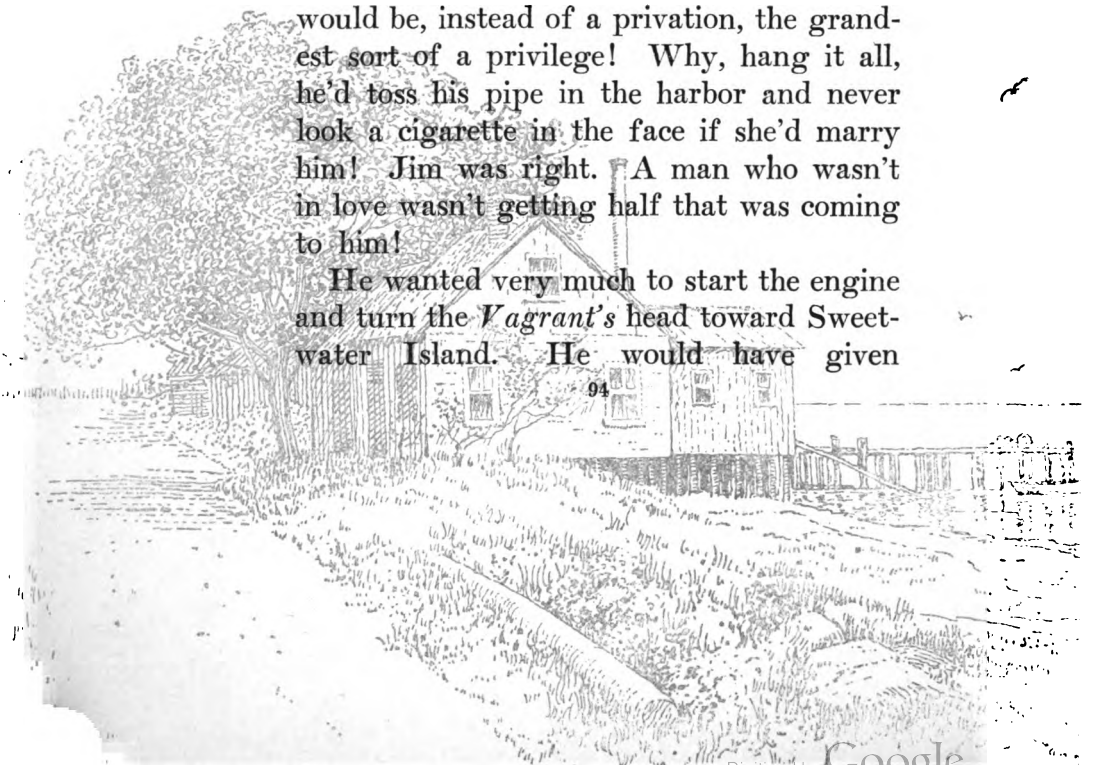
cards and stopped making loans to fellows who never meant to repay them, and—yes, he smoked less. Undoubtedly he could make a big saving in that line if he set out to. As for the cards, well, he didn't care much for them; and it was an established rule that married men were exempt from making loans. When it came to cutting down on smoking—— He shook his head doubtfully. He worshipped his pipe, liked cigarettes pretty well, and relished an occasional cigar. Perhaps it wouldn't be necessary.—Then a sudden vision of Judith as he had seen her yesterday came to him and he realized that to give up tobacco or anything else would be, instead of a privation, the grandest sort of a privilege! Why, hang it all, he'd toss his pipe in the harbor and never look a cigarette in the face if she'd marry him! Jim was right. A man who wasn't in love wasn't getting half that was coming to him!

He wanted very much to start the engine and turn the *Vagrant's* head toward Sweetwater Island. He would have given





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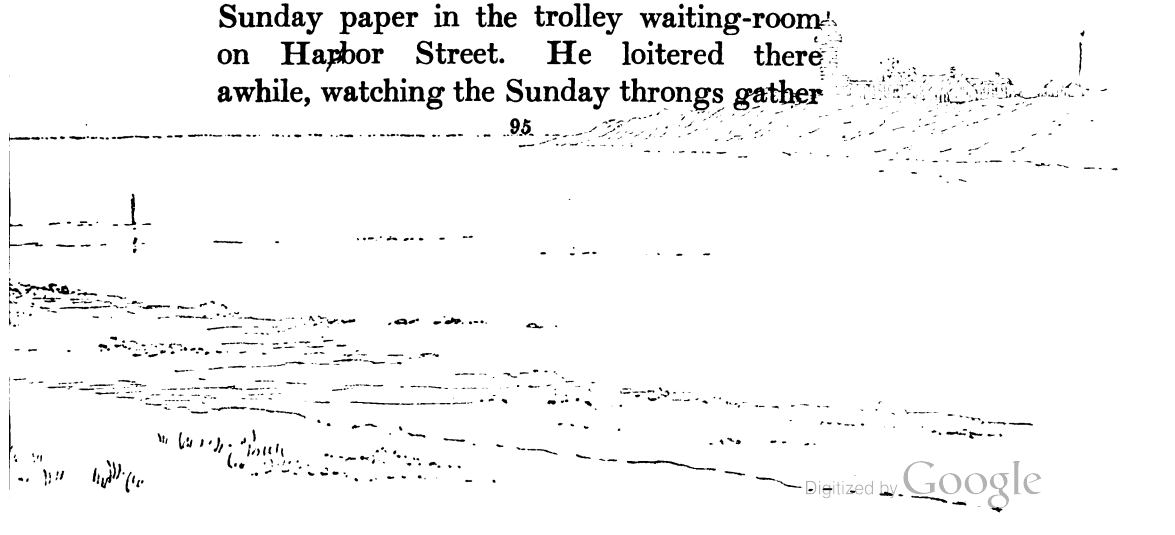
a whole lot for another sight of Judith. But discretion held him back. He knew very well that later on he wouldn't be able to keep from making a nuisance of himself. Now, when it was still possible to keep away from her, he would do it. He could get through this one day somehow; and to-morrow he would reap his reward. If she cared at all about seeing him she would appreciate him more after an absence. Tom smiled at his subtlety. Jim wasn't the only one who knew about women, after all!

But as an earlier compensation for his self-denial he promised himself that in the afternoon he would sail the *Vagrant* by the island and, if nothing more, treat himself to a view of the blessed little cottage that held her. But the afternoon seemed a long way off, and whole hours remained to be lived through meanwhile. He paddled across to the landing and bought a Sunday paper in the trolley waiting-room on Harbor Street. He loitered there awhile, watching the Sunday throngs gather





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and disappear as the infrequent cars arrived and departed. Then he returned to the shade of the *Vagrant's* cockpit and the comfort of his chair and tried to read the paper. But his thoughts proved so much more interesting than the day's news that he found little to claim his prolonged attention until a dip into the society section revealed to him a half-page, highly-colored story, which, masquerading under a Newport date-line, purported to give the latest gossip regarding the principals in the next international alliance. With a slight scowl for the cheap sensationalism of the thing, Tom smoothed the paper open and read the article.

There was a profile picture of Judith Sypher and a full-face likeness of Count Anton Salzstadt, but both were scarce better than inky smudges. It is doubtful if even Judith's Aunt Norma would have recognized that picture as a portrait of her niece. There were pictures, too, of the Sypher residence in New York, of Aunt Norma's "cottage" at Newport, a trifling little affair apparently covering something like

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an acre of ground, and of Count Salzstadt's castle in Liechtenstein, the latter, evidently a *tour de force* of the artist's imagination, depicting a much-battlemented, many-towered structure perched dizzily on a mountain crag. (Tom wished that the Count would fall over the edge and break his silly neck!) The article was written in a half-facetious, semi-sarcastic vein that made Tom grind his teeth. Another American fortune, amassed by years of constant labor and wise investment, was to go in the purchase of a foreign title. The writer hinted that the purchaser was not even getting her money's worth; that while the Salzstadt family was an old one and distantly related to that of the present ruler of Liechtenstein, Prince John II, that it had notably run-out during the last century and was, in terse American, small pumpkins.

Of the Count himself the writer found several nice things to say, but as a matrimonial investment for the Sypher millions it was evident that he didn't suit. He was



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compared unfavorably, at the expense of much space, with other aspirants, successful and unsuccessful, for American fortunes and daughters. The writer allowed it to be distinctly understood that in his judgment Judith Sypher was making a sorry investment. It was quite taken for granted that the Count's visit to this country would result in the speedy announcement of the engagement, and "a close friend of the family" was quoted as predicting an October wedding at Newport.

At the present moment, it seemed, Newport was busily engaged in preparing for the lavish entertainment of the coming Count and in speculating on the motives which had caused Miss Sypher to mysteriously withdraw herself from society. It was generally understood that she was staying with distant relatives in Delaware and would not return to her Aunt's house until the arrival of Count Salzstadt. Society thought such action strange and greatly at variance with the proper demands of the



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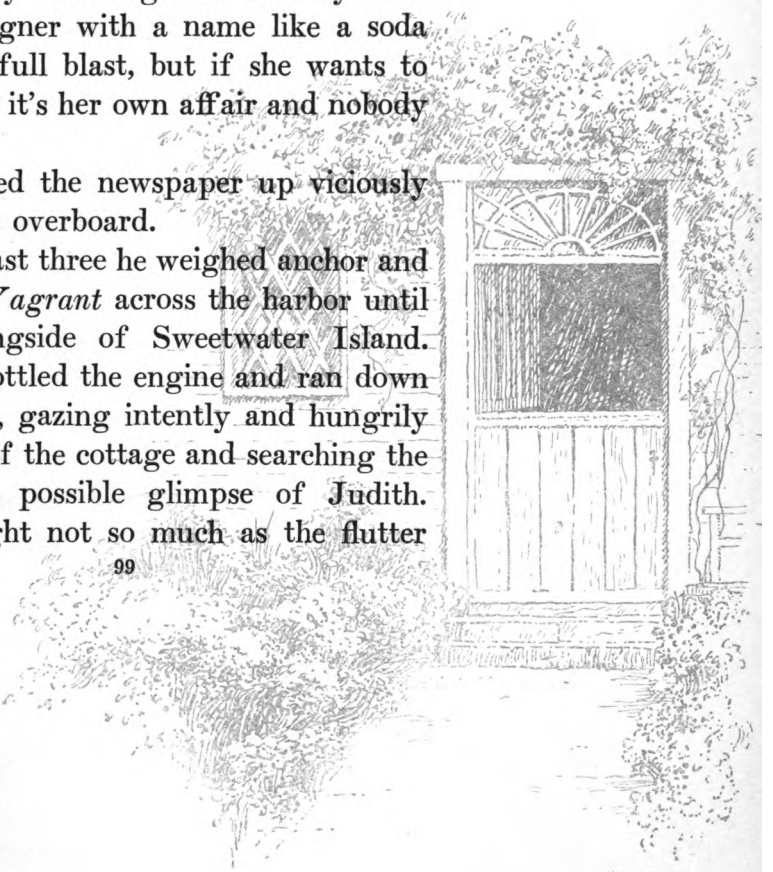
occasion. It was fitting that a person to whom so much interest attached should remain in evidence and not hide herself from the interested gaze of the public.

Tom tossed the paper down with a grunt.

"Hope the fellows out at camp don't see that," he thought. "Jim would be madder than a hornet! Hang these newspapers, anyhow! I hate to think of a nice girl like Judy throwing herself away on a darned foreigner with a name like a soda fountain in full blast, but if she wants to do it I guess it's her own affair and nobody else's!"

He bundled the newspaper up viciously and tossed it overboard.

At half-past three he weighed anchor and headed the *Vagrant* across the harbor until he was alongside of Sweetwater Island. Then he throttled the engine and ran down to the Point, gazing intently and hungrily at the back of the cottage and searching the place for a possible glimpse of Judith. But he caught not so much as the flutter





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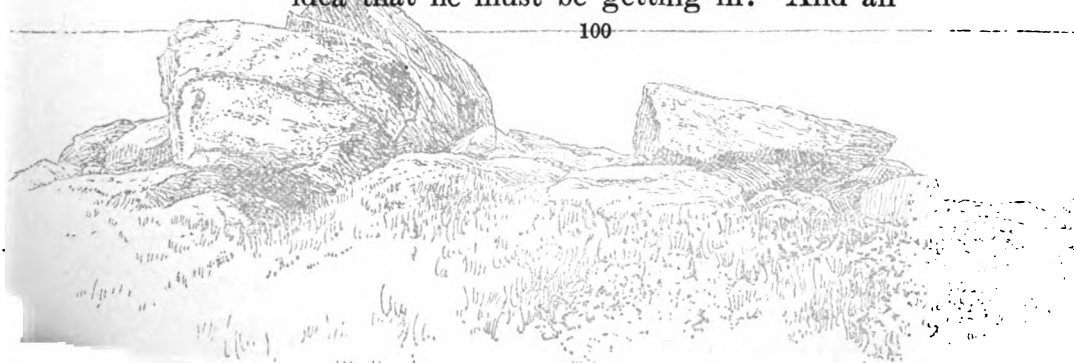
of her dress, and so kept on out to sea and cruised about until well toward twilight. When he came back the light was shining whitely in the afterglow and he had a momentary view of Captain George climbing the path from the landing, the collie trotting sedately at his heels. But that was all, and Tom headed the launch back to its anchorage with a feeling of intense disappointment which he tried to laugh away.

"I suppose you expected her to be standing at the Point waving her handkerchief at you, you blooming idiot!" he told himself in ridicule. "You're getting plumb locoed, you are!"

He went to the hotel for dinner, and afterwards found a chair on the broad veranda and listened to the chatter and watched the slowly-moving procession of dinner toilettes and dress coats, and felt strangely lonely and unhappy. It was such a novel sensation that he found himself feeling his pulse, dimly dismayed by the idea that he must be getting ill! And all





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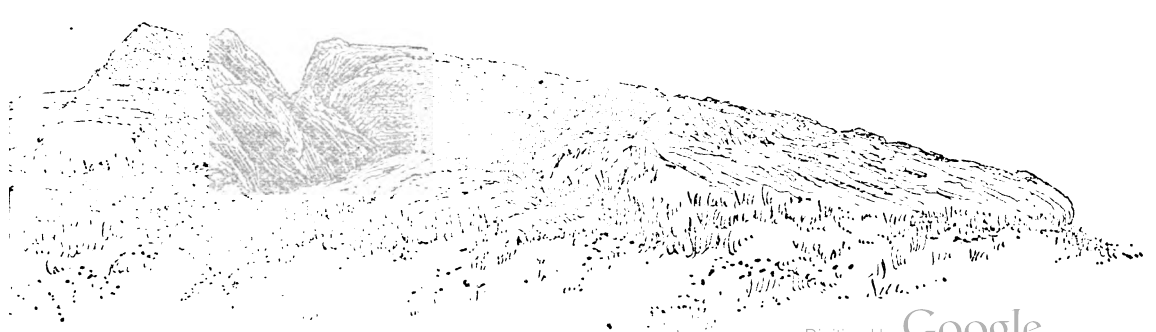
the time the light on Sweetwater Island winked across at him and seemed to mock his misery. Tom tossed away his cigar and sighed deeply. This thing of being in love wasn't all fun, by any means, Jim Haskins to the contrary!



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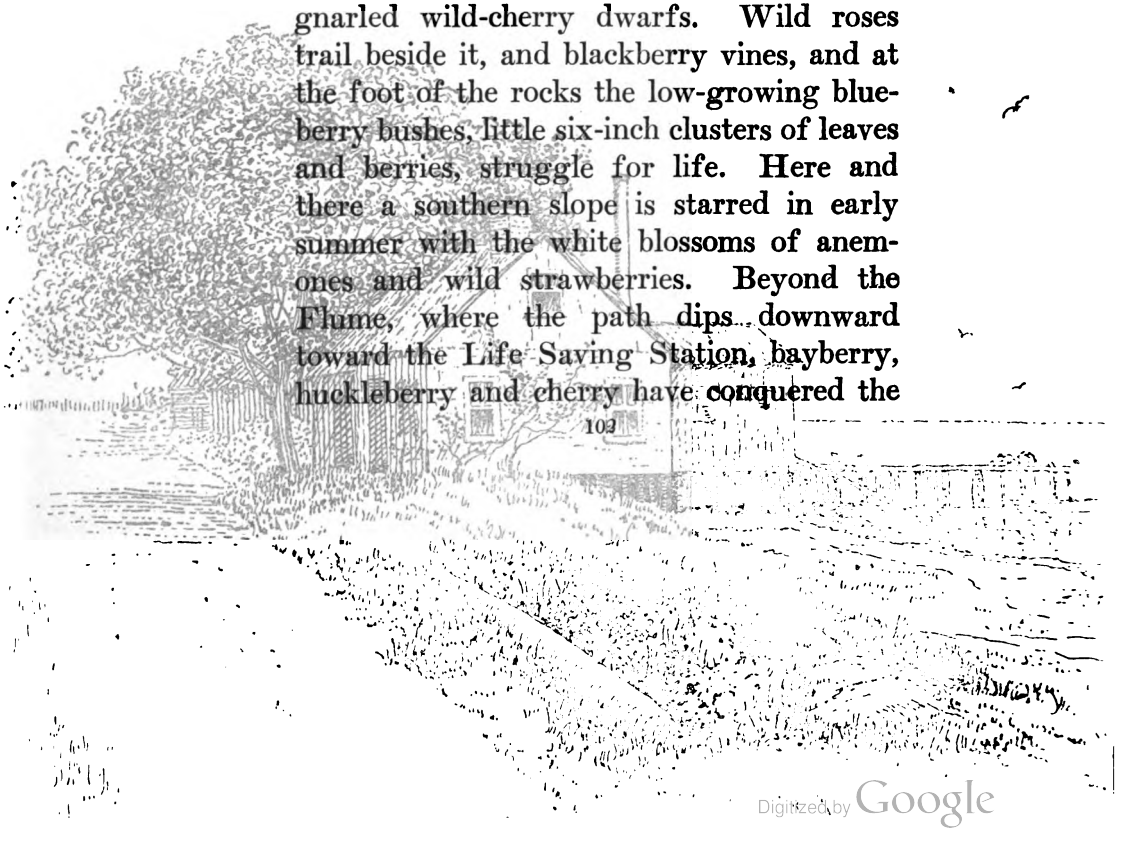
## VII.

FROM the lighthouse the path winds eastward along the edge of the island, skirting the rocks which thrust themselves helter-skelter into the sea, until it reaches the Life Saving Station. From thence it doubles back inland through the grove of scrubby trees and bushes until it skirts the cranberry bog and comes out on the margin of the pond. For most of its way it is a scarcely defined track between bowlders and grass, hedged sometimes by bayberry and little gnarled wild-cherry dwarfs. Wild roses trail beside it, and blackberry vines, and at the foot of the rocks the low-growing blueberry bushes, little six-inch clusters of leaves and berries, struggle for life. Here and there a southern slope is starred in early summer with the white blossoms of anemones and wild strawberries. Beyond the Flume, where the path dips downward toward the Life Saving Station, bayberry, huckleberry and cherry have conquered the





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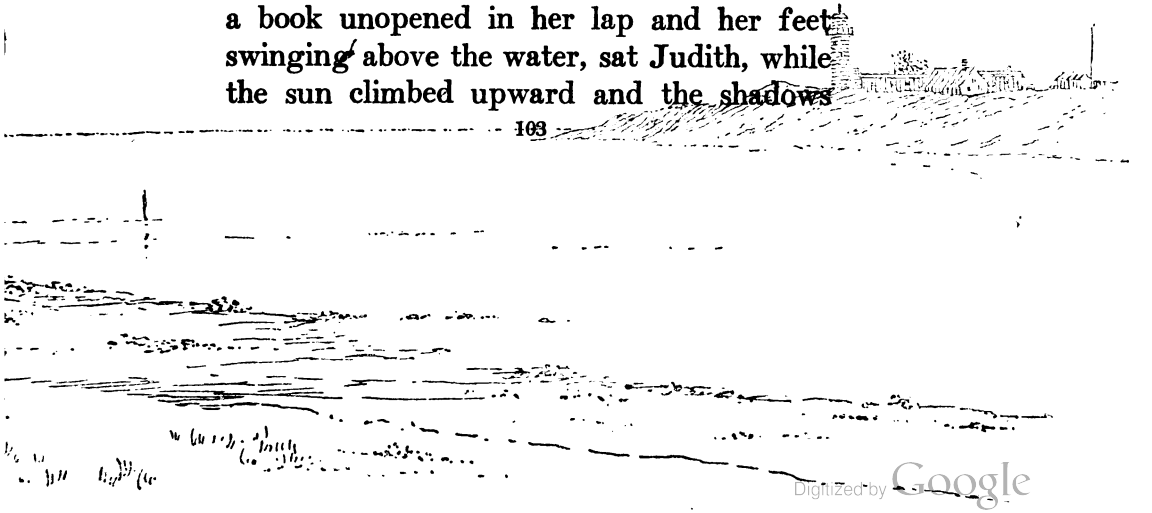
stubborn turf and made a far-stretching green plantation. There are tall bushes of viburnum, too, in the moister spots, and of honeysuckle, but these cluster shoulder to shoulder in the hollows where the long winds can only toss their upper branches.

The cranberry bog is upholstered with sphagnum moss, and one may walk across it without wetting more than the soles of one's shoes, and, if lucky, find dainty lilac-pink orchids. Cat-tails stand on guard here and tall brakes uncurl their "fiddle-heads." Along the south side of the pond a line of pollard willows, twisted and bent as though the winter gales had crippled them with rheumatism, throw their misshapen shadows upon the water. And yet by very reason of their infirmities, as though a life of suffering and thwarted ambition had made them sweet of heart, they proffer comfortable lodgement to the idle or the weary.

In the cosey crotch of one of these trees, a book unopened in her lap and her feet swinging above the water, sat Judith, while the sun climbed upward and the shadows





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shortened. It was a brisk morning, with a ruffling wind blowing from the south-west. But here in the hollow only its voice reached her. The farther side of the pond laughed and glittered under the brisk kisses of the breeze, but elsewhere it was a mirror of blue sky and lazy white clouds, marred only when a bird touched its surface with a glancing wing. It was an ideal spot for dreaming, and Judith, in spite of the book in her lap, had done nothing else for an hour. Somehow Sweetwater Island seemed a poor place for reading. Let her but open a book and find her place and something occurred to coax her attention away from the printed page. For the first fortnight of her self-imposed exile she had read scarcely a chapter from the many books she had brought. For the last week or so, or, to be exact, since the *Vagrant* had appeared out of the fog, she had read not one line. If before that event there had been much to think of, now there was a great deal more. No girl of twenty, whether she be plain or fair, rich or poor,

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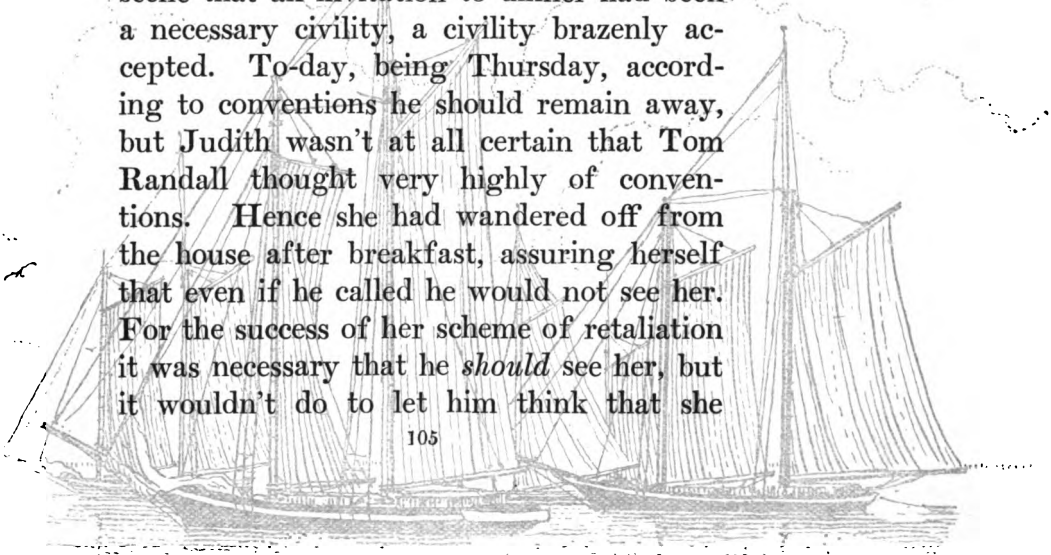
can remain quite undisturbed by the advent of a lover, whether that lover be welcome or unwelcome. In Judith's case the lover was welcome. She told herself so quite frankly. She wanted revenge and she meant to have it. Mr. Thomas Randall had deeply offended her, and if she had spoken of forgiveness it was with an unspoken reservation.

Since his first visit to the lighthouse she had seen Tom twice. He had appeared on Monday and again on Wednesday, on the latter occasion remaining so late on the scene that an invitation to dinner had been a necessary civility, a civility brazenly accepted. To-day, being Thursday, according to conventions he should remain away, but Judith wasn't at all certain that Tom Randall thought very highly of conventions. Hence she had wandered off from the house after breakfast, assuring herself that even if he called he would not see her. For the success of her scheme of retaliation it was necessary that he *should* see her, but it wouldn't do to let him think that she





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wanted him to come; a show of indifference would produce a speedier subjection; and once she had him at her feet—well, Mr. Thomas Randall should see!

At the cottage she had bound them all to secrecy. To Tom she was still just "Judith," with a last name that "meant nothing." She meant to reveal herself to him, but not until she had fooled him to her heart's content. She felt very unforgiving then.

There were moments when she wondered why his offence should appear so great. He had only spoken of kissing her, while once a man had actually tried and she had only felt an angry loathing which had prompted no reprisal. It seemed inconsistent, but the fact remained that she wanted to hurt him, to humble him. And what seemed even more incongruous, she liked him, liked him better than any man she had ever met. That didn't mean, however, that she was in love with him, for she had never been really in love in her life, her only affair of the heart having occurred



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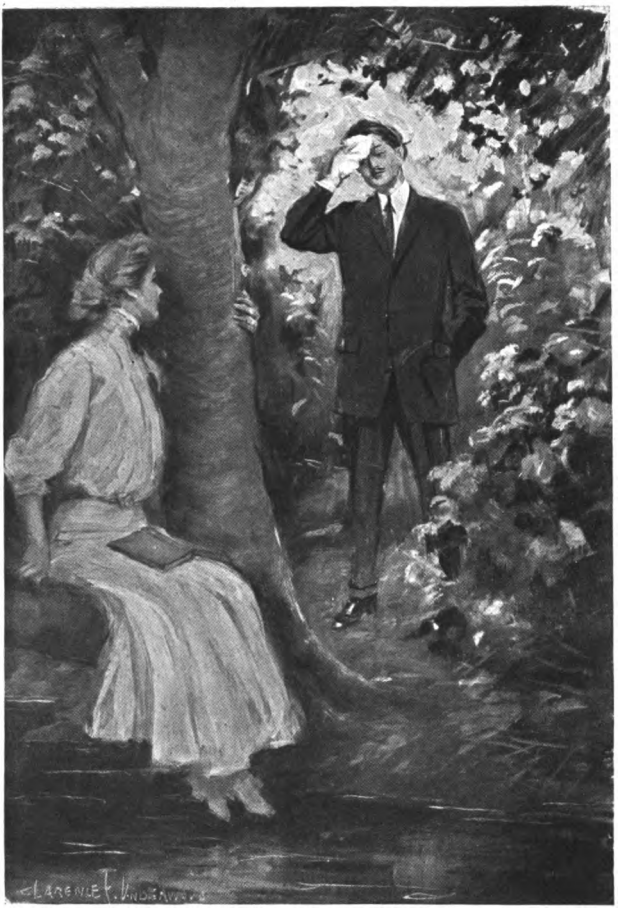

"I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD WALK SO FAR ON AN ISLAND," HE SAID

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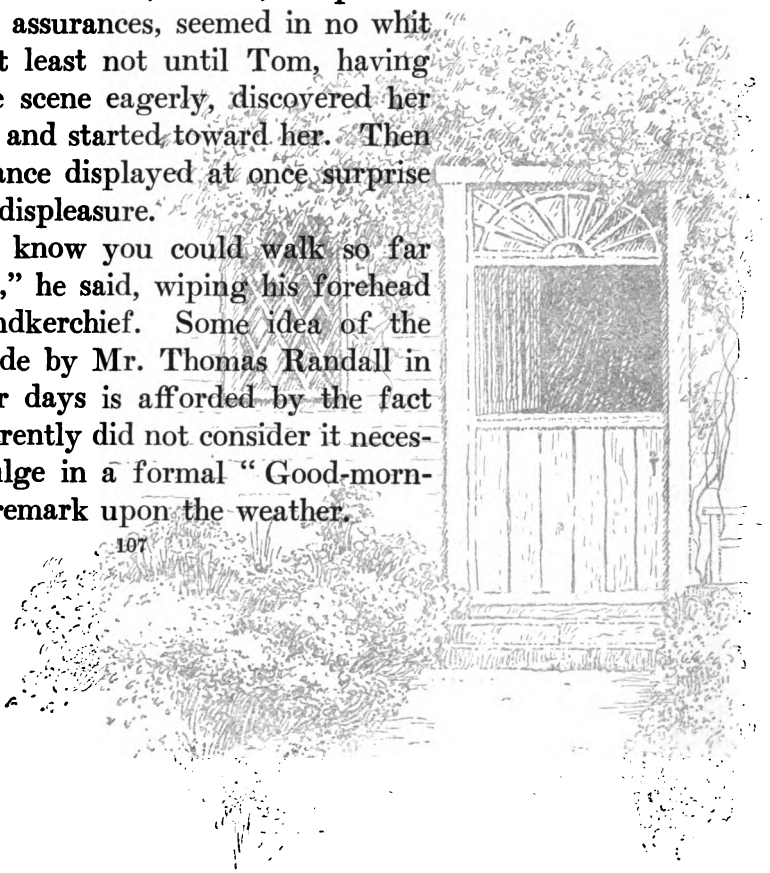
at the impressionable age of fifteen, when at boarding school she had acknowledged an undying and hopeless passion for the French instructor. In the case of Count Salzstadt—but Judith's thoughts dwelt upon the Count very infrequently these days.

The sudden angry shrieking of a catbird broke the silence, followed by the soft thud of footsteps on the path. When Tom appeared an instant later, Judith, in spite of her previous assurances, seemed in no whit surprised; at least not until Tom, having surveyed the scene eagerly, discovered her whereabouts and started toward her. Then her countenance displayed at once surprise and a faint displeasure.

"I didn't know you could walk so far on an island," he said, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. Some idea of the progress made by Mr. Thomas Randall in the last four days is afforded by the fact that he apparently did not consider it necessary to indulge in a formal "Good-morning" or to remark upon the weather.





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"Perhaps you don't like to walk," observed Judith, distantly.

"Depends where I'm going," replied Tom, leaning against the tree and surveying her with frank admiration. "I'd walk from here to Frisco if you were at the other end. *Walk?* I'd run!"

"Mr. Randall, I don't want you to talk that way," said Judith, coldly. But Tom had reached a stage where snubs rolled off him like water from a duck. He smiled, cheerfully.

"I can't always help it," he responded, striving to make his voice sound penitent. "When I feel a thing——"

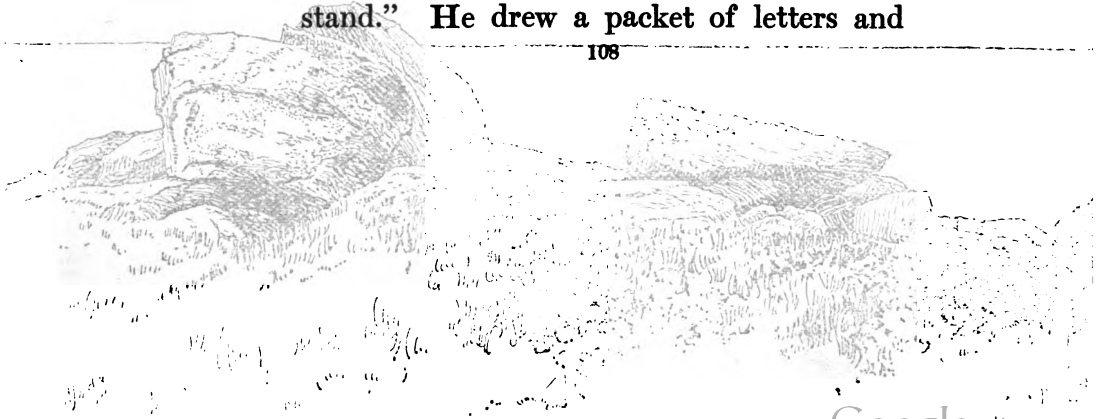
"If you really want to walk don't let me detain you," she said, coldly.

"I don't. I'd rather sit down." He looked longingly at the place occupied by Judith.

"Pray do," she replied. "The second tree beyond has a very comfortable crook to it."

"Huh!" grunted Tom. "I guess I'll stand." He drew a packet of letters and





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papers from the pocket of his jacket and selected a telegram. "I got that from Ferris this morning," he said, and passed it up to her. Judith took the message and read:

"Meet me Gloucester twenty-second without fail.

"WHARTON."

"That's to-morrow, isn't it?" she asked. Tom nodded cheerfully. "And you've come over to leave p. p. c. cards on Mrs. Poggs and Captain George and Mister Dixon and me?" she continued, gayly. "This is a formal visit of farewell, Mr. Randall?"

"Not exactly," answered Tom. "I wrote in reply—it's on the other side, isn't it?" Judith turned the sheet of yellow paper and found five words scrawled thereon in pencil:

"Impossible. Look for letter.

"TOM."

"Then you're not going?" she asked, with



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more than a hint of disapproval. Tom shook his head.

"Not so you'd notice it," he replied, flippantly.

"But won't he be annoyed?"

"Rather," chuckled Tom. "But look here, Miss Judith, this is the first vacation I've had in two years and there's only another fortnight or so coming to me. Don't you think I deserve to spend it where I please and as I please?"

"But you started out with your friend and now you're deserting him!"

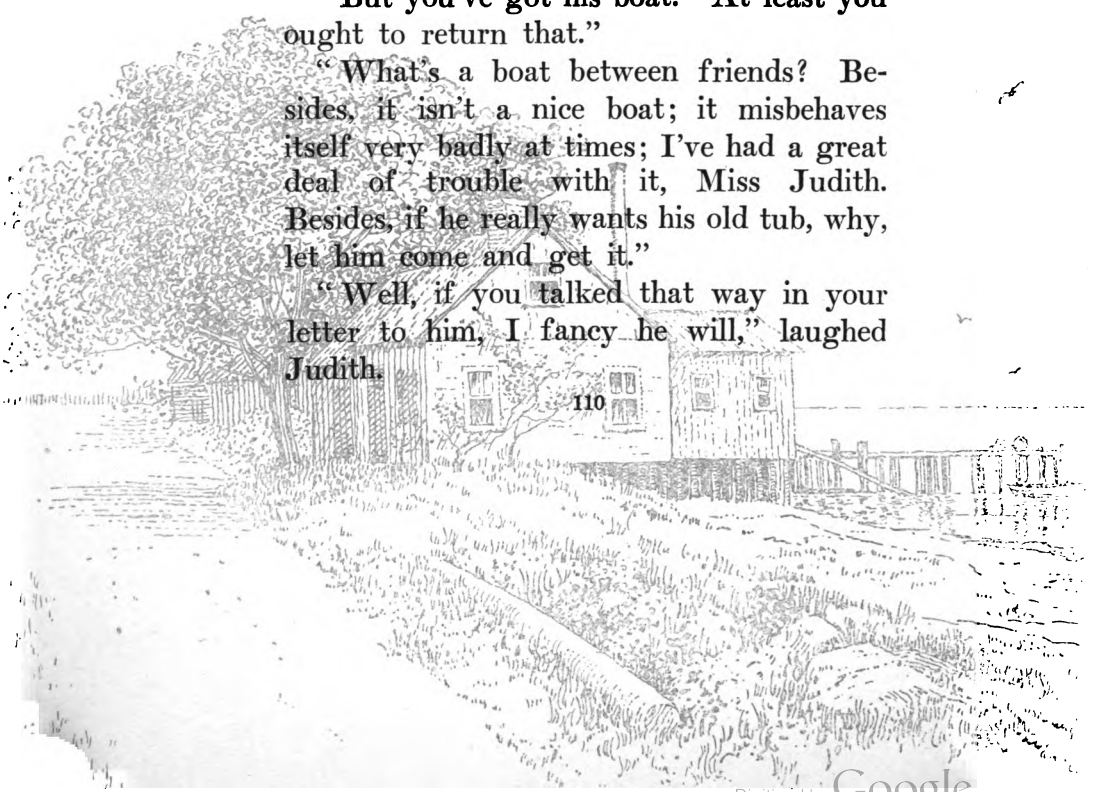
"Not a bit of it; he deserted me."

"But you've got his boat. At least you ought to return that."

"What's a boat between friends? Besides, it isn't a nice boat; it misbehaves itself very badly at times; I've had a great deal of trouble with it, Miss Judith. Besides, if he really wants his old tub, why, let him come and get it."

"Well, if you talked that way in your letter to him, I fancy he will," laughed Judith.





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"Oh, there isn't going to be any letter. I hate to write the things. I just put that in the telegram so he'd have something to keep his mind off his trouble. You see, it's a fair guess that that girl has thrown him down; if she hadn't, or if there hadn't been a rumpus of some sort, he'd been with her yet. So I told him to look for a letter. It won't come and he will be provoked with the mail service and threaten to have the postmaster discharged and—well, don't you see, that will keep him from getting melancholy."

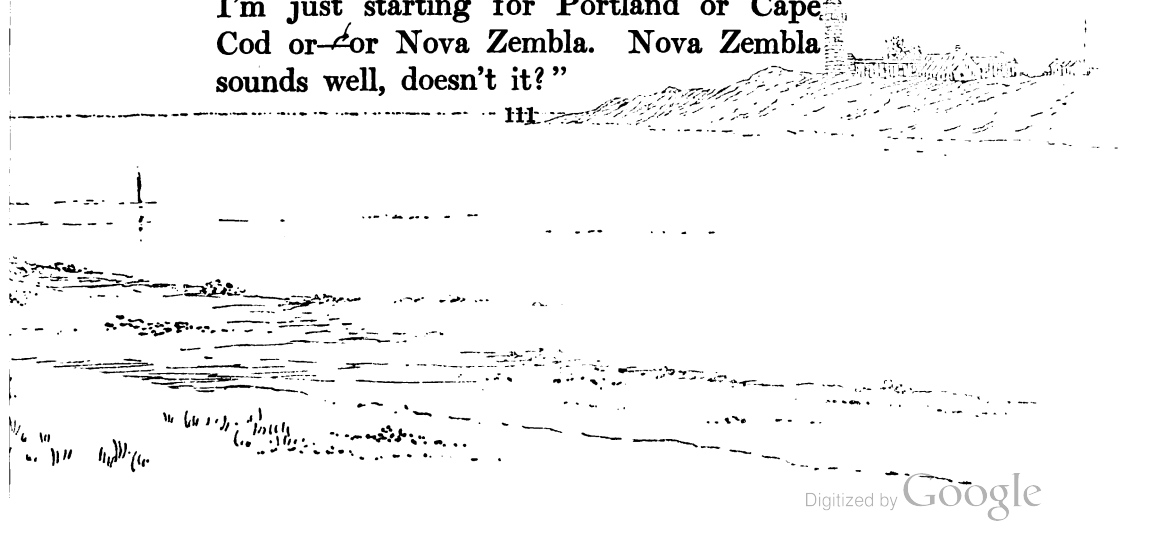
"I don't think you're treating him very well," said Judith, severely. "I fancy he will tell you so himself when he comes."

"Yes, I guess he will," chuckled Tom. "But we won't worry about that. You see, I haven't sent that answer yet."

"You haven't——"

"Not yet, because I've been wondering whether it wouldn't be better to tell him I'm just starting for Portland or Cape Cod or—or Nova Zembla. Nova Zembla sounds well, doesn't it?"





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"Mr. Randall!"

"Well, if he comes here he's sure to bother me. He will want to come over here with me and be a nuisance generally. Of course I'd be very glad to have him along, but I'm sure he'd bore you. He *will* talk about books. It's a hobby with him; he collects 'em. But it's tiresome."

"I should think he would be very interesting," said Judith. "I'm fond of books, too."

"Really? So am I. Of course, I don't have time to read much, but I take a fall out of one now and then. Have you read that last one of Oppenheim's?"

"I don't think so," replied Judith, doubtfully.

"It's a dandy! I've forgotten the name of it; I read it between Omaha and Chicago. I'm certain you'd like it. Let me get it for you, will you?"

"You're very kind," answered Judith, "but I have so many now that I haven't read, Mr. Randall." Tom looked disappointed.



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"I might read it to you," he suggested, tentatively. Judith suppressed a smile.

"That would be very nice, but I hardly think we would have many opportunities, Mr. Randall."

"Are you going away?" he asked, in alarm.

"Not quite yet." Tom's face clouded and his buoyancy departed.

"You mean then, Miss Judith," he asked, gravely, "that you think I am coming here too often?"

"What do you think?" she responded, lightly.

"It's hardly for me to say," he replied, slowly. "I like to come, but if I'm annoying you—you know I don't want to do that, Miss Judith."

"I didn't mean that," she answered. "Only——" She hesitated, then turned with a little flush in her soft cheeks. "Mr. Randall, may I speak plainly?"

Tom made a grimace and replied dubiously: "Certainly; although that means



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you want to say something I sha'n't like to hear."

"It's this," she went on, soberly. "I'm twenty years of age, Mr. Randall, and I've been out two years; so, you see, I'm not exactly inexperienced."

Tom nodded, a little questioning frown puckering his forehead.

"And I've observed, Mr. Randall, that flirtations are likely to be dangerous; sooner or later either the man or the woman forgets the rules of the game and—gets hurt. So don't you think that we had better——"

"Do you mean that I have been flirting with you?" cried Tom, in bewilderment. "Why, great gosh, Miss Judith, I never flirted in my life! I don't know how to flirt!"

"Really," laughed Judith, ironically, "aren't you a little bit absurd, Mr. Randall? You've known me for six days and you've seen me five times. You surely don't think I am credulous enough to believe that you are in love with me?"



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"Whether you believe it or not, it's a fact," answered Tom, vehemently. "I suppose it does sound sort of sudden, Miss Judith, but it only took six days to make the earth, and that was a blame sight harder thing than falling in love with you!"

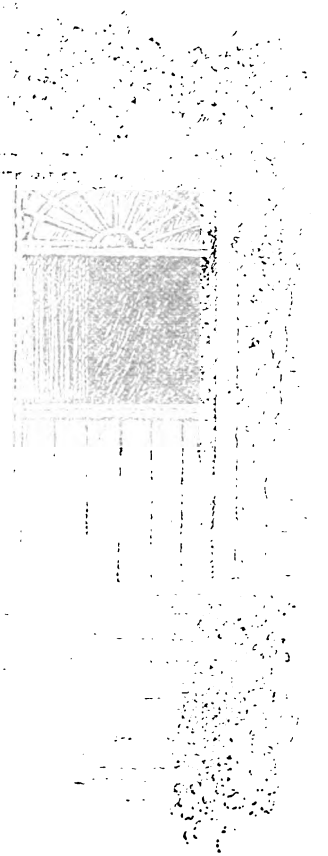
"Mr. Randall! Please!"

"Oh, I know it sounds cheeky," went on Tom, desperately, "but I can't help it. I surely do love you! Why, I never met a girl before in all my life that could hold a candle to you!"

"You know absolutely nothing about me," murmured Judith.

"What has that got to do with it? I'm not in love with your folks, or your last name. I don't care anything about them. I know you! Why, great gosh, it seems like I'd known you for a thousand years! I wasn't going to tell you this now; maybe I've queered myself for keeps by going off half-cocked like this; but I couldn't stand for you thinking I was flirting with you. I'm not much of a catch for a girl like you, Miss Judith, but if ever a man was just





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dying to work his fingers down to the bone for the woman he loved that man's me."

"Mr. Randall, I—I want to tell you——" In spite of herself Judith's voice trembled and her heart was fluttering in a way that frightened her.

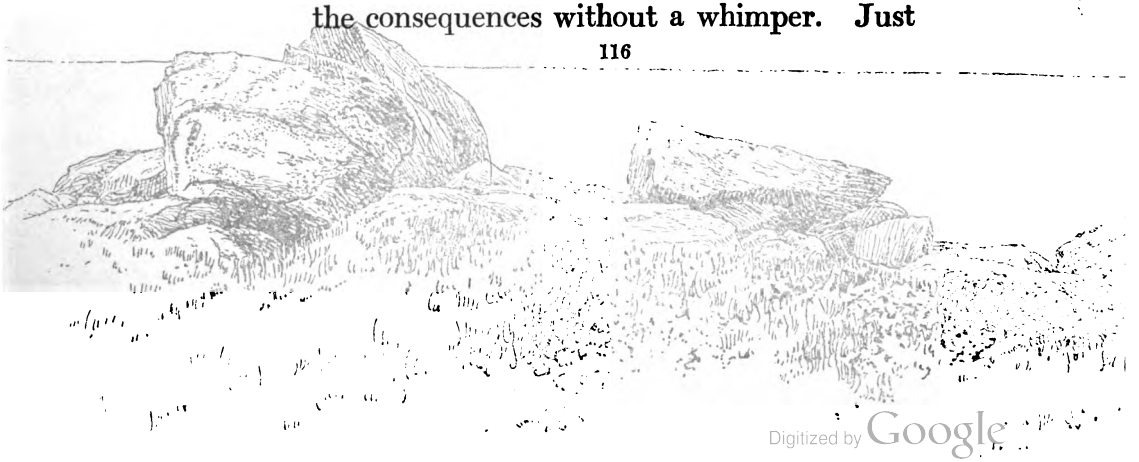
"No, don't, please!" he begged. "Don't say anything now. Give me another week, won't you? I know what you'd say now. Perhaps you'll say the same thing then, but give me a chance. You'll do that, won't you?"

He had found her hand and was holding it crushingly between his own, striving to look into her averted face.

"I mustn't," she whispered. "It—it's no use."

"That means now," he protested. "How do you know whether it'll be no use a week from now? I never tried to make a woman care for me before, and I don't know where to begin, but I'll do my"—he choked something down—"my best, dear, and I'll take the consequences without a whimper. Just





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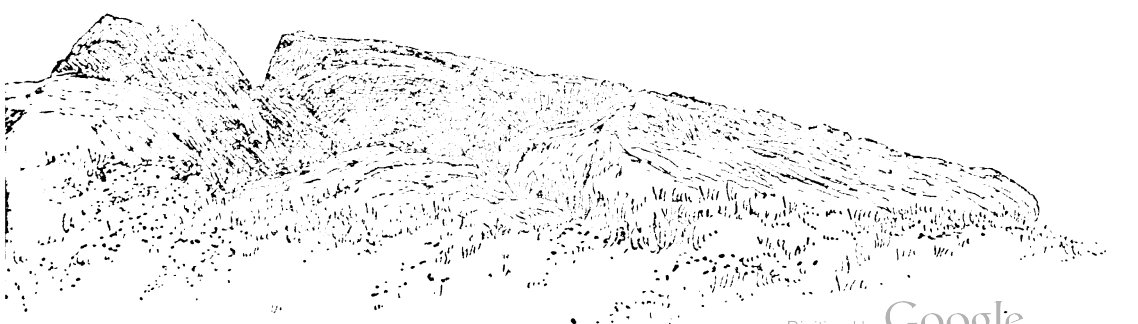
give me the chance, the fighting chance, Judith. Will you?"

There was no answer for a moment. Then she turned a pair of troubled blue eyes down upon him and her head dropped once. Tom gave a great sigh of relief and joy and she pulled her hand from his. It was aching, but she scarcely knew it. Everything had suddenly turned topsy-turvy, she thought, as she stared out over the pond. She had had her chance and had let it go by. That sweet revenge which she had promised herself was still untasted. Oh, yes; there was time enough yet, but somehow the desire for it had left her! She smiled tremulously. She had discovered something sweeter than revenge. She had only to stretch her hand forth to grasp it. But she didn't, for in this strange confusion that bound her there was a new and dismaying timidity. Her heart prompted instant surrender, but the world-old wisdom of Mother Eve counselled against it. Oh, it was all terribly, wonderfully perplexing and delicious!





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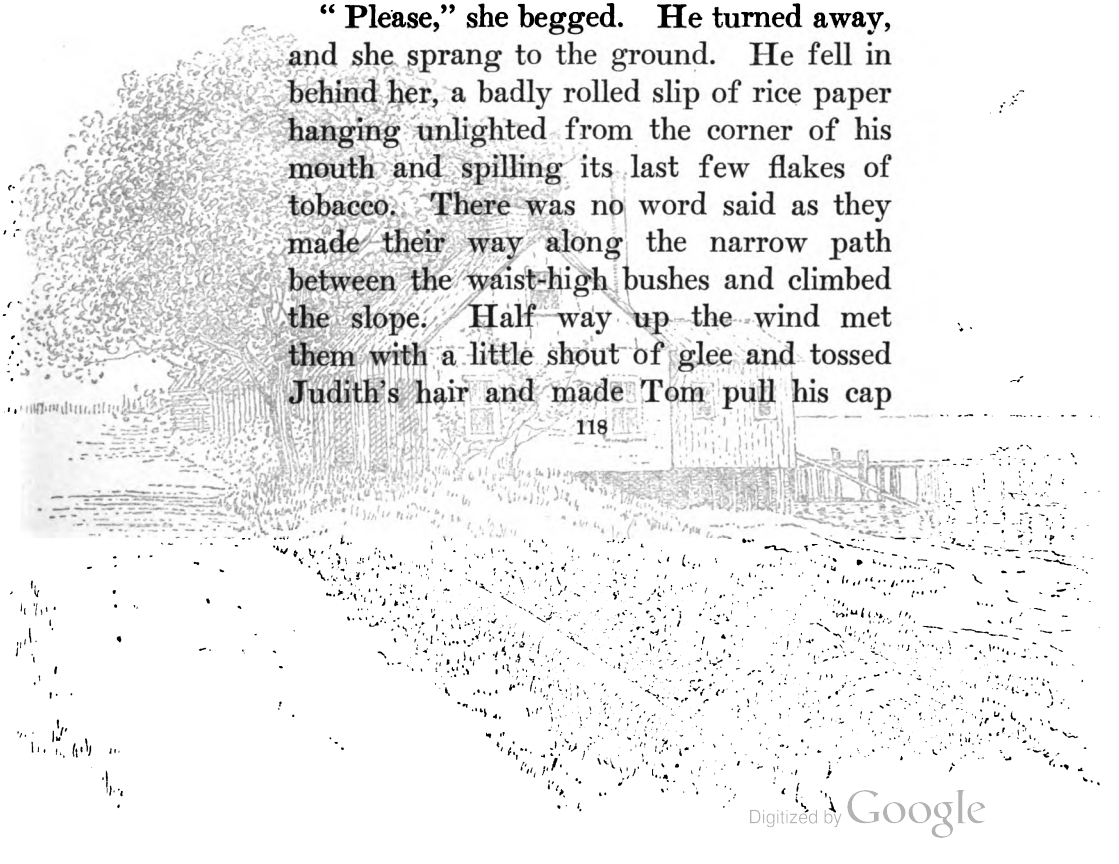
Tom was trying to make a cigarette, but his hands trembled even worse than they had done that day on the launch. He, too, was looking across the pond, but it was just a dazzling glare of silver and blue and green to his eyes, and had you asked him what he saw I think he would have just said, "Heaven!"

"It is time to go back," murmured Judith, presently. She stole a glance at him and was relieved to find that she could meet his gaze without feeling the blood rush to her face. The discovery gave her courage. Tom held up a hand eagerly.

"Please," she begged. He turned away, and she sprang to the ground. He fell in behind her, a badly rolled slip of rice paper hanging unlighted from the corner of his mouth and spilling its last few flakes of tobacco. There was no word said as they made their way along the narrow path between the waist-high bushes and climbed the slope. Half way up the wind met them with a little shout of glee and tossed Judith's hair and made Tom pull his cap





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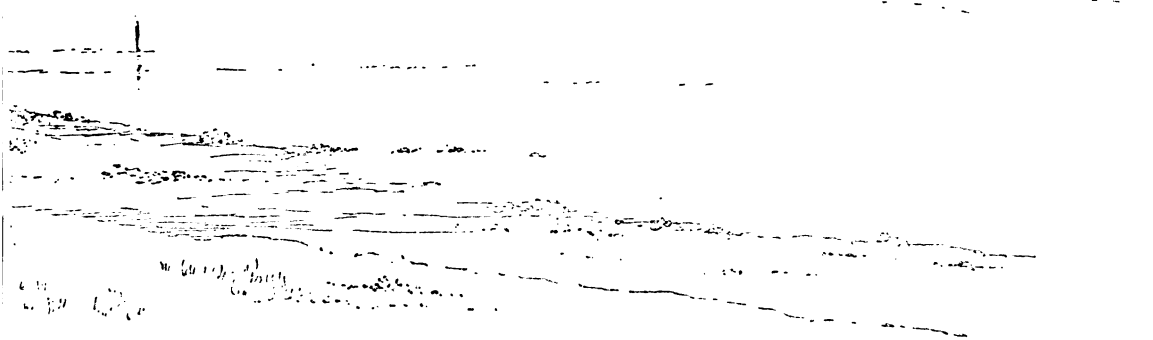
further down upon his head. Then they were out on the bluff with the tiny waves tumbling against the granite rocks below and the breeze was buffeting them with boisterous ardor. Here the path was wide enough for two, and Tom took his place beside her, looking wonderingly and longingly down at her.

Only one soft cheek was visible, that and the glory of her hair and the slender, graceful figure swaying to the wind. A great tenderness that was almost like a pain gripped his heart and spread chokingly to his throat. If only she might be his to care for and protect! But in another moment his presumption seemed to him so colossal, so absolutely insane, that his heart sank. Surely he had been out of his senses back there at the willows! Not only had he probably spoiled any chance of success which might have been his, but he had, insolently as it seemed to him now, engaged, to win her love in a week! Of all fatuous fools! His lot seemed very hopeless then.

"Why," he wondered, exasperatedly,





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"didn't I suggest something easy, like finding the North Pole or damming Niagara? Why, a girl like that wouldn't find anything in me to care for if I camped on her trail for ten years! And I proposed to do it in a week! In a week! Good Lord!" He groaned so loudly that Judith heard and looked fleetingly up at him over her shoulder.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I didn't say anything," answered Tom, morosely. "I was only doing a lot of thinking."

"Well, please do say something," she said, with a little hysterical laugh. "The gulls will think we've been quarrelling."

So they exchanged weighty remarks about the wind and the sky and the weather and the little fishing-sloop that was dipping its way around the point until they were back at the gate. He held it open for her and she passed through. He didn't follow, nor did she appear to expect him to.

"Good-bye," she said, smilingly.

"I may see you to-morrow?" he asked.



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"Would you like to?"

"Yes," he answered, simply.

"Very well, for a little while, then. Only"—she dropped her gaze to the collie which had trotted forward to meet her—"we have been talking a good deal of—of nonsense this morning, Mr. Randall, haven't we? Let us forget how silly we've been and—and behave. Shall we?"

"It wasn't nonsense," he replied, gravely. "And I can't very well forget it. I don't want to, anyhow. But you needn't fear that I shall bore you every minute by—by telling you I love you. You know that already. I guess I've been mighty presumptuous, Miss Judith, and maybe you've been having a good laugh at me all to yourself. But I'm not taking back anything I said; I'm not hedging. I still want that week you agreed to. I'm to have it?"

Judith glanced up with a little frown.

"Did I agree to anything?" she asked.

"Yes, to a week of grace," he responded.

"Very well, Mr. Randall, I'll keep to my agreement. Only—if at the end of



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that time—things don't turn out just as you wish—you mustn't hold me to blame."

Tom shook his head, smiling a trifle dejectedly.

"I guess," he said, "you couldn't do anything I'd blame you for."

Then he took off his cap and turned away down the path to the landing. Judith remained at the gate for a moment, looking after him with a puzzled frown. Then her face cleared and she laughed softly to herself and went toward the cottage. The collie paced at her heels, wagging his tail in perfect comprehension.

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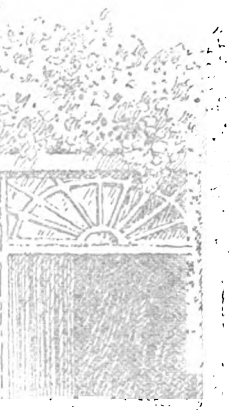
## VIII.

When Tom came up the path from the landing the next morning it was with a sedateness quite new and ill-setting. Usually he ran most of the way to the top of the bank and from there conquered the rest of the distance to the cottage door with long free strides that were as natural and unconstrained as the easy swing of his broad shoulders. But to-day he might have been pacing a church aisle on the way to his pew. There was constraint in every movement. And then his attire!

Heretofore he had always appeared in negligée of blue serge, soft shirt, tan shoes and a checked cap that was quite as often on the back of his head as on the top. To-day he was immaculate in a suit of gray. The bosom of his starched shirt was almost entirely hidden by a striped linen vest, silk stockings and black Oxfords adorned his feet, a sober straw hat sat at the conventional angle on his head, and his tie was





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pierced by a gold pin. From the breast-pocket of his jacket protruded a triangle of handkerchief, blue-bordered, and on his hands were tan gloves. And he bore carefully a great oblong package that simply shouted, "ROSES!"

Judith, who for some time past had been looking out on the harbor from the window of her little chamber under the eaves, saw and marvelled. But bewilderment turned to amusement when Janet appeared at the door with a card.

"Mr. Randall to see you, Miss Judith," announced her maid. "And he sent his card."

"Tell Mr. Randall I'll be down in a moment, Janet," replied Judith, her eyes dancing. "And, Janet."

"Yes, Miss?"

"Ask Mr. Randall into the parlor."

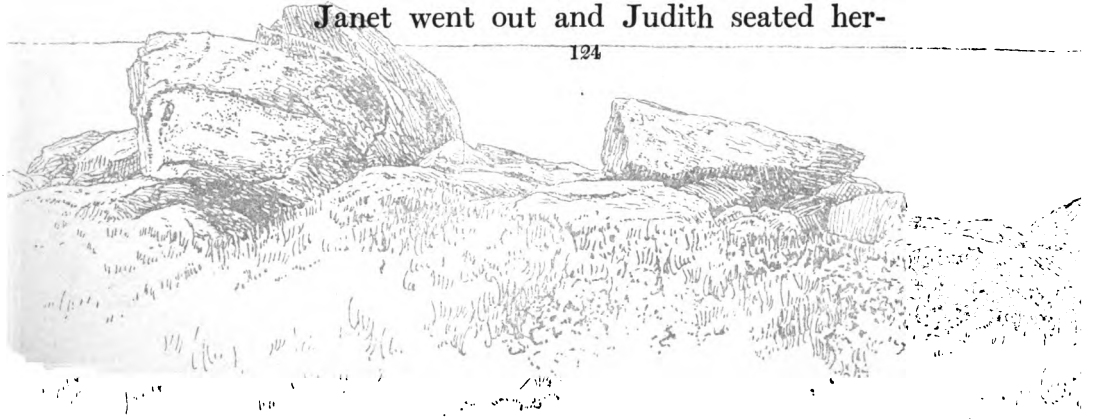
"The parlor, Miss?"

"The parlor, Janet; and see that he goes."

"Yes, Miss."

Janet went out and Judith seated her-





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self in the chair at the window again, laying her watch face upwards on the little table in front of her. For ten minutes she sat there. Then, stopping for a moment before the glass, she went demurely down stairs.

The parlor was a tiny musty room into which the sunlight was seldom allowed access. Its furnishings consisted chiefly of an agonizing sofa and four chairs of walnut and black horsehair, a marble-topped walnut table, a cottage organ and a big base-burner stove which stood, lord of all it surveyed, on a square of shining tin. Back of the stove was a marble mantel-shelf bearing two silver-glass vases holding dried flowers, an iron clock, a huge sea-shell indecently pink, and three cabinet photographs. As the two windows were shaded so as to exclude all light, Tom was spared more particular acquaintance with those photographs.

The floor was carpeted with a Brussels of great antiquity, a thing of alternating red and green medallions, and the walls

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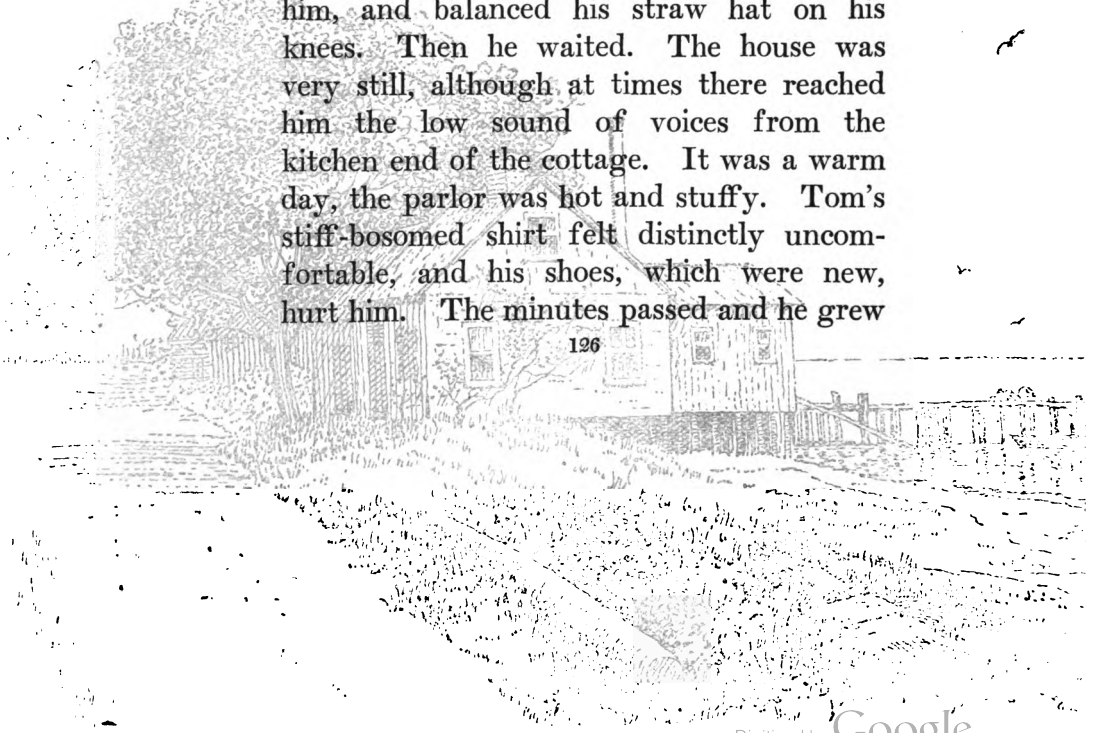
were papered in brown and gold. There were a few inconsequential pictures, and over the organ hung what at first sight appeared to be a crusader's sword but which was in reality only the weapon of some dead and gone swordfish provided with a wooden hilt and handle and decorated with what was probably intended for a painting of Sweetwater Island Light. The center-table held a glass lamp on a worsted mat, the family Bible, a number of photographs in an envelope-shaped affair of crimson velvet, and a prettily-framed picture of Janet Poggs at some tender age.

Tom sat himself in one of the slippery chairs, deposited the box of flowers beside him, and balanced his straw hat on his knees. Then he waited. The house was very still, although at times there reached him the low sound of voices from the kitchen end of the cottage. It was a warm day, the parlor was hot and stuffy. Tom's stiff-bosomed shirt felt distinctly uncomfortable, and his shoes, which were new, hurt him. The minutes passed and he grew





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more and more depressed. He almost wished he hadn't come. He quite wished he hadn't dressed for the occasion. After all, he reflected, he couldn't see that he looked any better in the present get-up than in his usual less conventional garb. In fact, he wasn't at all certain that he didn't look very much like a silly ass! By the time Judith appeared it was a very chastened and depressed caller who awaited her. Judith entered in her best society manner and gave her hand to Tom.

"So good of you to call, Mr. Randall," she declared. "Have I kept you waiting long?"

Tom murmured something quite unintelligible.

"It's very warm, isn't it?" continued Judith brightly, as she sank gracefully onto a corner of the sofa. "Hardly any air, and that's very unusual for the island, for usually it is breezy here no matter what it is like on the main-land. Captain George maintains that the summers are changing. He says they used to be much longer and



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very much hotter than they are now. Personally, though, I don't believe a word of it. Folks are always telling you how different things were when they were young. I think it's just imagination, don't you, Mr. Randall?"

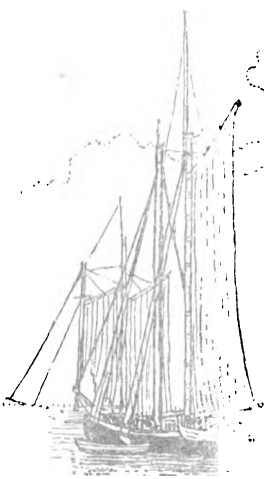
"I guess it is," replied Tom. "I've brought——" He had the box on his knees now. But Judith rattled on.

"Besides, you know, we have the weather authorities on our side. They declare that neither the winters nor the summers have changed in—oh, a long time. Still, I don't know, for I remember that when I was a very little girl and lived on Long Island the snow used to be awfully deep and used to stay on the ground for weeks and weeks. And nowadays, why, we sometimes don't have one really decent snowstorm all winter, do we?"

"Well, out our way——" began Tom.

"Oh, in Colorado it must be very different, of course. I suppose you have more snow than——"

"We do," interrupted Tom, desperately.





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"And speaking of snow reminds me that I thought perhaps you'd like a few roses, Miss Judith." He rose precipitately and his straw hat jumped down and rolled under the stove. While he fished it out, Judith, murmuring expressions of surprise —having, of course, failed to notice the package!—undid the wrappings and lifted the cover.

"Oh, they're perfectly beautiful!" she cried. Tom, having recovered his hat, arose somewhat red of face and viewed the blossoms in disapproval.

"They're not much," he said. "I ordered American Beauties, and those are what they sent."

"Oh, but I think these are much lovelier," she answered, drawing the long, loose-petaled buds to her face and darting a smile at him through the pink bower. "I fancy Beauties are out of season now; that's probably why they sent these Killarneys. Aren't they dear?"

Tom, looking, assented heartily. Since



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Judith approved of them, what was he to find fault?

"What did you say they were called?" he asked, interestedly.

"Killarney. I think the name's almost as pretty as the flower, don't you? It's so nice and Irish, and it makes you think at once of blarney, doesn't it?"

"Doesn't it?" he echoed, with enthusiasm. Well, when you came to think of it, it did. He said the name to himself several times in order to memorize it. He was so glad now that the Boston florist hadn't sent American Beauties!

"Thank you very much, Mr. Randall," said Judith. She drew one of the unopened buds from the cluster and broke the stem off short. "As a reward I'm going to decorate you with the Order of Killarney. May I?"

"Please," he answered. He stepped forward and leaned toward her, his hands holding his hat behind him. Judith took his coat lapel in one hand and with the other strove to work the stem through the but-



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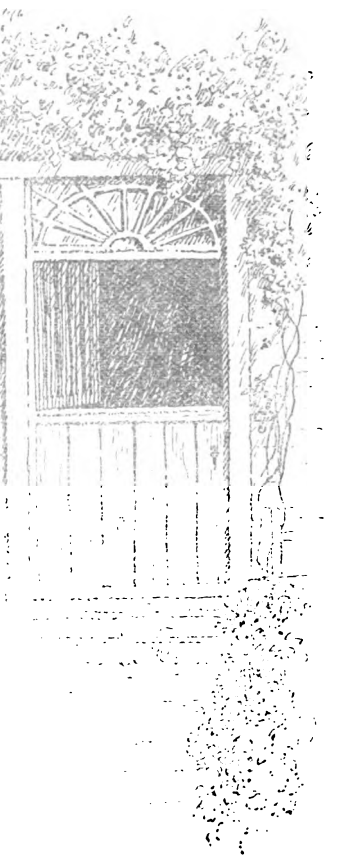
tonhole. It brought her very close to him; she could feel his breath stirring her hair; she repented of her temerity and her fingers faltered and lengthened her task. She felt the color creeping up into her cheeks and wished that he would say something. It was so stupid of him to stand there like a stick! The *tick-tock* of the clock on the mantel grew louder and louder, and, oh dear! it wasn't *tick-tock* at all, but, *Take her! Take her!* Supposing he heard it, and—and *did!* There reached her the sound of crackling straw as his fingers tightened on the hat in his hands; she felt him stir restively; somebody's heart—was it his, or hers?—was trying to drown the voice of the clock. In sudden panic she tugged frantically at the obdurate stem; it came away in her fingers and the pink bud fell to the floor.

"Oh," she cried, in relief, backing away from him, "how stupid of me! But you may have another."

But he had picked up the fallen bloom





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and was trying with trembling fingers to set it in his buttonhole.

"If I had a pin," he muttered, in strained tones.

"I'll get one," she cried, and ran out of the room. Tom sank into a chair and heaved a deep breath. Then he cradled the rosebud in the palms of his two hands and dropped his face against it. . . .

Tom declares that he can tell a Killarney rose from fifty others by its perfume.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs and Tom arose. But it was only Janet who entered. With a murmured apology she crossed to the couch, gathered up the roses and started out with them. But at the door Tom called to her.

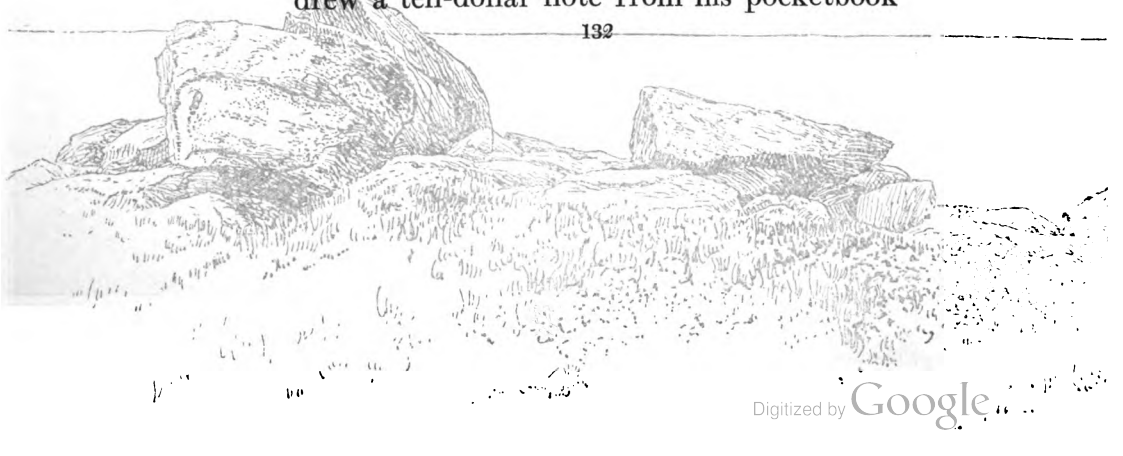
"Yes, Mr. Randall?"

"Janet." He stopped and listened. "Janet, you have a birthday coming soon, haven't you?"

"Not until October, sir," she answered.

"Well, I may not see you then, you know, so I'd like you to accept this." Tom drew a ten-dollar note from his pocketbook





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and dropped it amongst the long stems of the roses. "With best wishes for many happy returns of the day, Janet."

Janet dropped her eyes and smiled demurely.

"Oh, thank you, sir," she murmured.

"Not at all," replied Tom. She raised her eyes, the smile hovering discreetly about the corners of her mouth.

"If there should be anything I could do for you, sir——"

"Thank you," answered Tom. "If there is I will let you know, Janet."

Janet curtsied and disappeared with the roses.

Presently Judith reappeared, smiling and composed.

"Here's your pin," she said. "Do you think you can fix it?"

"I think you could do it better," he replied.

But she shook her head.

"No, I'm all thumbs to-day."

So Tom pinned the rosebud on his lapel, placing a finger in his mouth afterwards.

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"It's a good thing there aren't a dozen of 'em," he laughed ruefully. "If there were I'd be bleeding to death by this time."

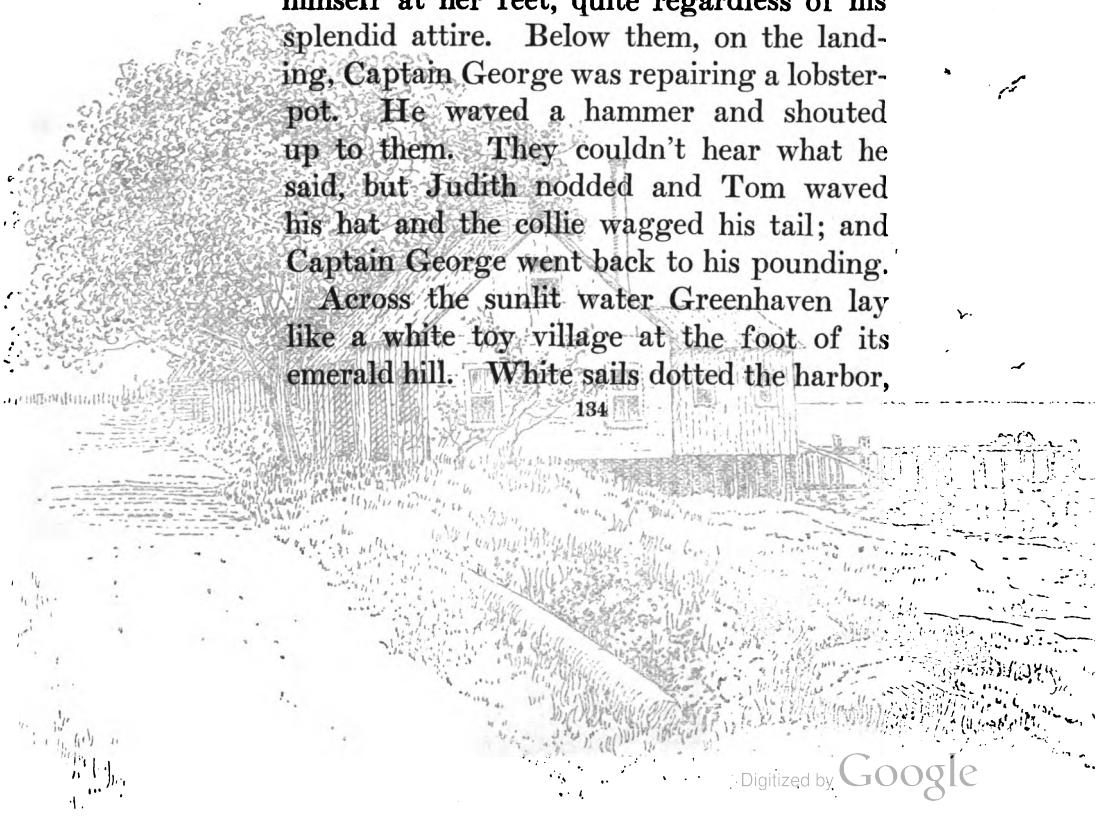
Judith, who, since her return, had been hovering about the parlor door, now turned toward it with a glance over her shoulder.

"It's rather warm in here, don't you think?" she asked. "Shall we go outside?"

So they passed out of the cottage and, escorted by the collie, wandered up over the ledge until they were in the shadow of the lighthouse. Judith found a comfortable cranny in the rock and Tom sprawled himself at her feet, quite regardless of his splendid attire. Below them, on the landing, Captain George was repairing a lobster-pot. He waved a hammer and shouted up to them. They couldn't hear what he said, but Judith nodded and Tom waved his hat and the collie wagged his tail; and Captain George went back to his pounding.

Across the sunlit water Greenhaven lay like a white toy village at the foot of its emerald hill. White sails dotted the harbor,





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impertinent launches sped back and forth along the opposite shore between hotel and town, and the tangle of masts along the wharves was like a fringe of leafless forest. A deeply-laden fishing-schooner passed close to the island in tow of a noisy tug. Beside the landing lay the *Vagrant*.

"I wish," said Tom, "that you'd come out in the launch with me some day. Won't you?"

"And manage the boat-hook for you?" she asked, slyly.

Tom laughed uncomfortably.

"I say, you might forget about that, Miss Judith. I was an awful old bear that day. I wonder why?"

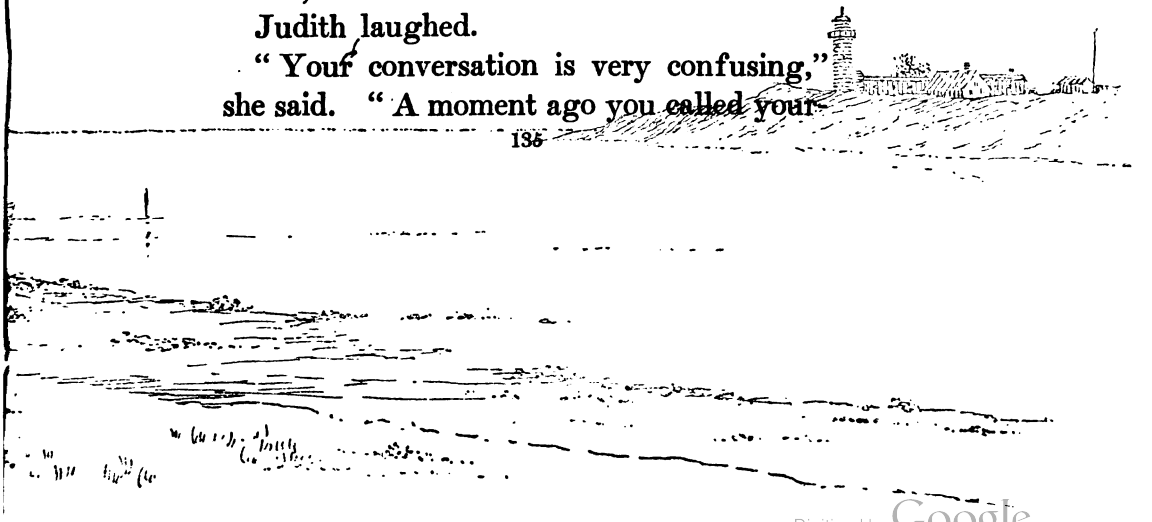
"I think you were annoyed at having to waste your time in rescuing an unknown female," replied Judith.

"Say, I didn't know what a lucky dog I was, did I?" he exclaimed in awed tones.

Judith laughed.

"Your conversation is very confusing," she said. "A moment ago you called your-





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self a bear, and now it's a dog. Please, which were you?"

"Just plain donkey, I guess," he laughed. "But you haven't answered my question yet. Will you come?"

"I'm not very brave," she hesitated.

"Nonsense! Why, I've got that old tub trained now so that she comes to heel and eats out of my hand. I'll bring you back safe and sound, Miss Judith."

"W-e-l-l, maybe, some day."

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow? Let—me—see, what are my engagements for to-morrow? I think there's a bridge breakfast in the morning, and a luncheon afterwards. And in the afternoon—what was it in the afternoon?"

"A sail with Tom Randall," he answered, promptly. "I suppose you wouldn't let me stop at the hotel over there? We could have tea on the piazza, you know."

"I think not, thank you," she replied. "I have forsworn society, Mr. Randall."

"Really? But you'll let me take you out, won't you? Promise!"

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"I promise! I'll tell Janet to note the engagement so I sha'n't forget it."

"That'll be all right; I'll answer for your not forgetting it; I mean that I'll see that you don't." The clang of a bell came from the cottage and Captain George dropped his hammer and started briskly up the path. But Tom seemed not to have heard it. Judith smiled. "Speaking of Janet," continued Tom, "she seems an awfully clever girl, Miss Judith."

"She is, but I didn't know that you were well enough acquainted with her to judge."

"Oh! Well, I'm not, of course," said Tom, hurriedly. "But just from what I've seen, you know——"

"Dinner, folks!" called the Captain, merrily. Tom started with a fine assumption of surprise.

"Dinner time already?" he exclaimed. "By Jove, I had no idea——"

Then he caught Judith's look and his protestations ended in a sheepish smile.

"Well, I'll have to be going," he said.



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But he didn't start; he only looked hopefully at Judith.

"I'm afraid you will," she replied, politely.

"I'm not very hungry," he said. "I might just wait here until you've finished. Don't you think I might do that?"

"I think you're a perfect fraud!" she cried, gayly. "And I shall make you stay to dinner just for punishment. I happen to know—for I live above the kitchen and my sense of smell is acute—that we are going to have salt codfish and cabbage, and I'm sure you don't like either of them!"

"Don't I, though!" he cried. "I'm crazy about 'em!"

"You're not!"

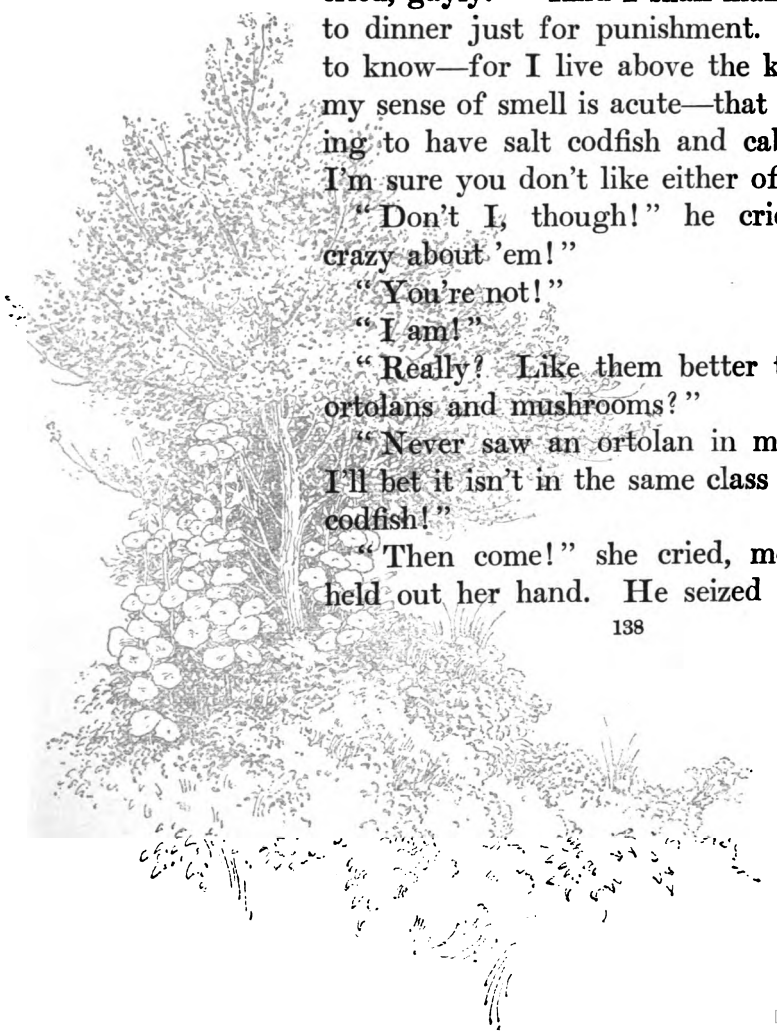
"I am!"

"Really? Like them better than—than ortolans and mushrooms?"

"Never saw an ortolan in my life, but I'll bet it isn't in the same class with a salt codfish!"

"Then come!" she cried, merrily, and held out her hand. He seized it and like





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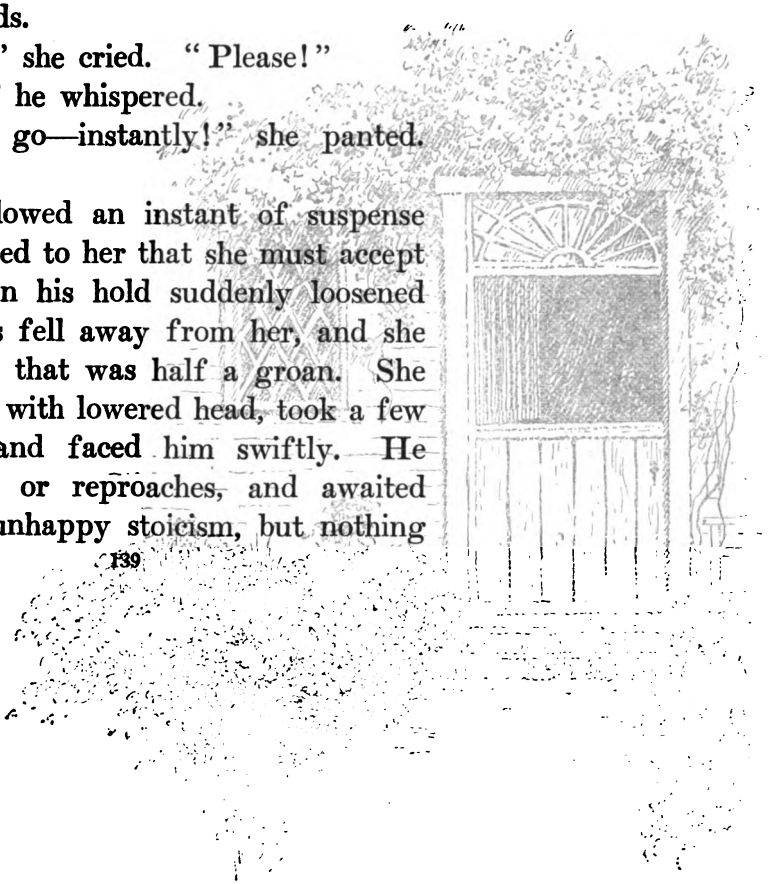
two children, with the collie bounding alongside, they raced over the ledge and reached the lighthouse panting and out of breath. Here Judith sought to free her hand from his, but could not, and ere she knew what was happening he had drawn her to him, his arms tightly about her, and was bending down, with his eyes—— But Judith's gaze fell swiftly before them and she struggled frantically, beating at his eager arms with her soft hands.

"No, no!" she cried. "Please!"

"Judith!" he whispered.

"Let me go—instantly!" she panted. "*Please!*"

There followed an instant of suspense when it seemed to her that she must accept defeat. Then his hold suddenly loosened and his arms fell away from her, and she heard a sigh that was half a groan. She turned away with lowered head, took a few slow steps and faced him swiftly. He feared tears or reproaches, and awaited either with unhappy stoicism, but nothing





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had prepared him for what he saw. Judith flashed him a look of smiling mockery.

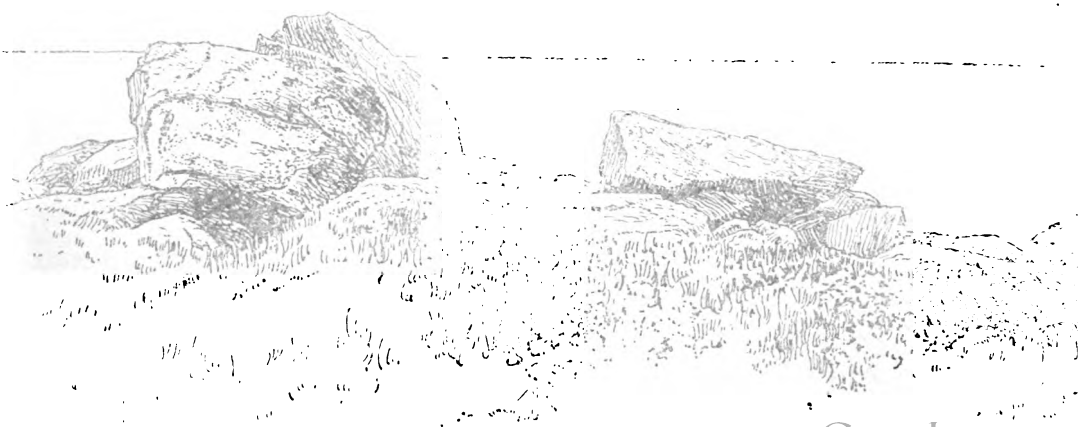
"Foolish man!" she said, softly.

And with that enigmatic remark she fled around the base of the lighthouse, leaving Tom staring blankly after her.

"I wonder——" he began. Then he shook his head in bewilderment, rescued his rosebud from the grass and thrust it absent-mindedly into a trousers pocket. For another moment he stared frowningly at the whitewashed stones before him. Then his face lighted with a sudden radiant smile, and,

"*By Jove!*" he whispered, in incredulous, awed delight.

Clapping his hat to his head he strode resolutely toward the cottage.



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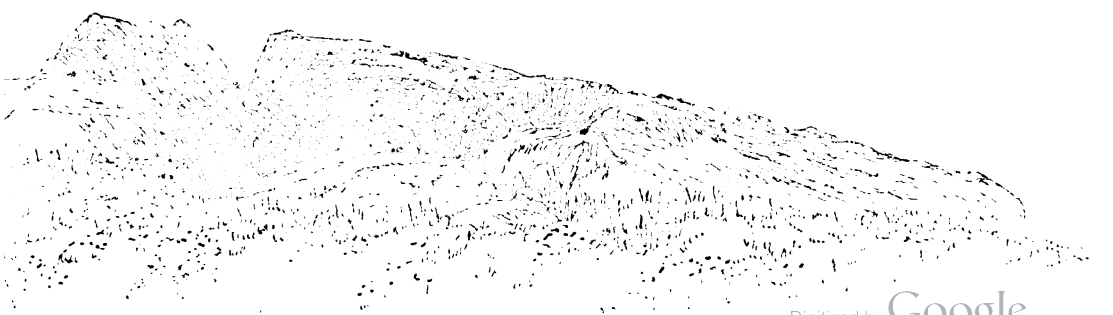
## IX.

Tom took his place beside Mister Dixon and bowed his head while Captain George said a simple grace. The Captain presided at the head of the table where a roast of lamb sizzled on an ancient blue platter with chipped edges. Mrs. Poggs beamed from the other end of the board behind a miniature barricade of cups and saucers, flanked by the teapot. She was small, rotund and placid, with dimples in her well-colored cheeks and a quantity of youthful-looking brown hair worn jauntily on top of her head. She had been a very pretty girl, one of four sisters whose fame had reached from Marblehead to Newburyport, when the Captain had gone acourting. The Captain in those days had been a rakish, swaggering young blade with a good family name and money in the bank. He was known as one of the smartest mates that sailed from Greenhaven; and at that time Greenhaven was second only to Gloucester





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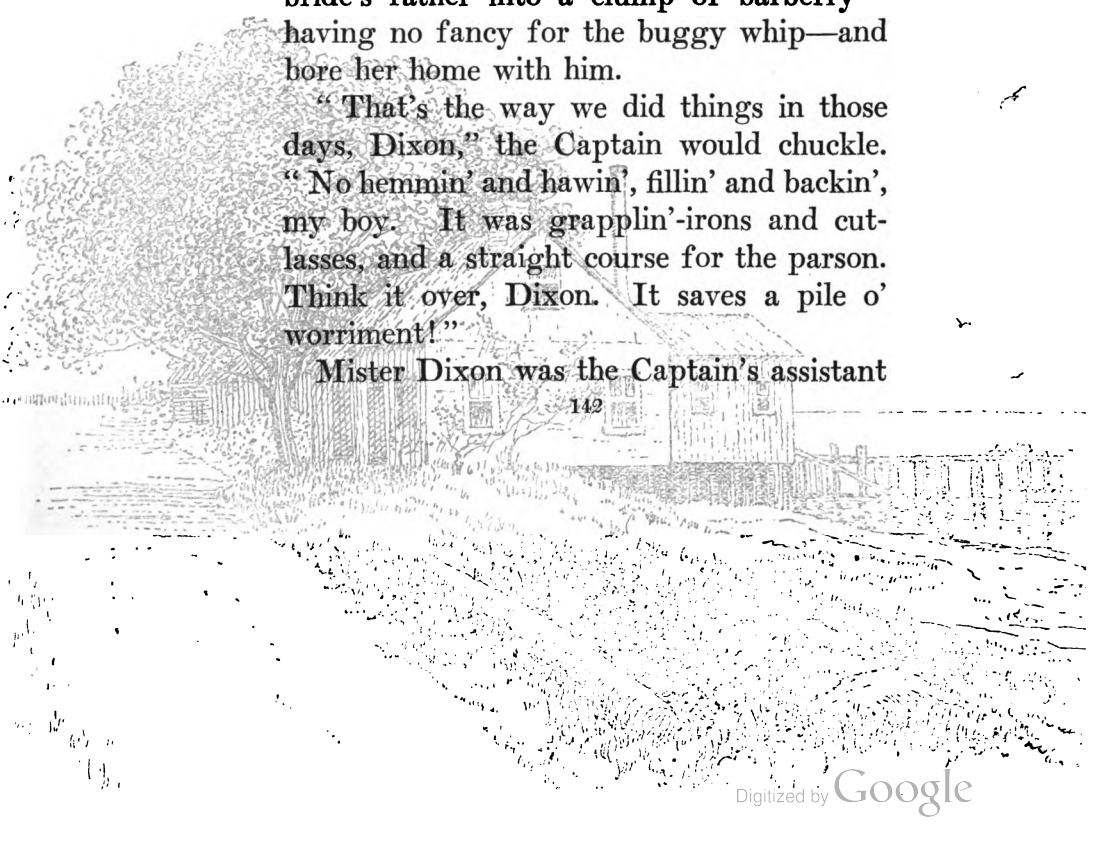
as a fishing port. The Captain's wooing had been brief and vigorous. He always declared that he could have had his pick of any of the "Mellis gals," and his wife never contradicted him. However that may have been, he chose the youngest of all, Martha, who at that time was just reaching seventeen. And because her father thought her too young to marry and counselled a year's waiting, Captain George ran off with her, and before the irate Mr. Mellis, pounding his white mare along the Newburyport road, could catch up with them they were married. Then the Captain knocked his bride's father into a clump of barberry—having no fancy for the buggy whip—and bore her home with him.

"That's the way we did things in those days, Dixon," the Captain would chuckle. "No hemmin' and hawin', fillin' and backin', my boy. It was grapplin'-irons and cutlasses, and a straight course for the parson. Think it over, Dixon. It saves a pile o' worriment!"

Mister Dixon was the Captain's assistant





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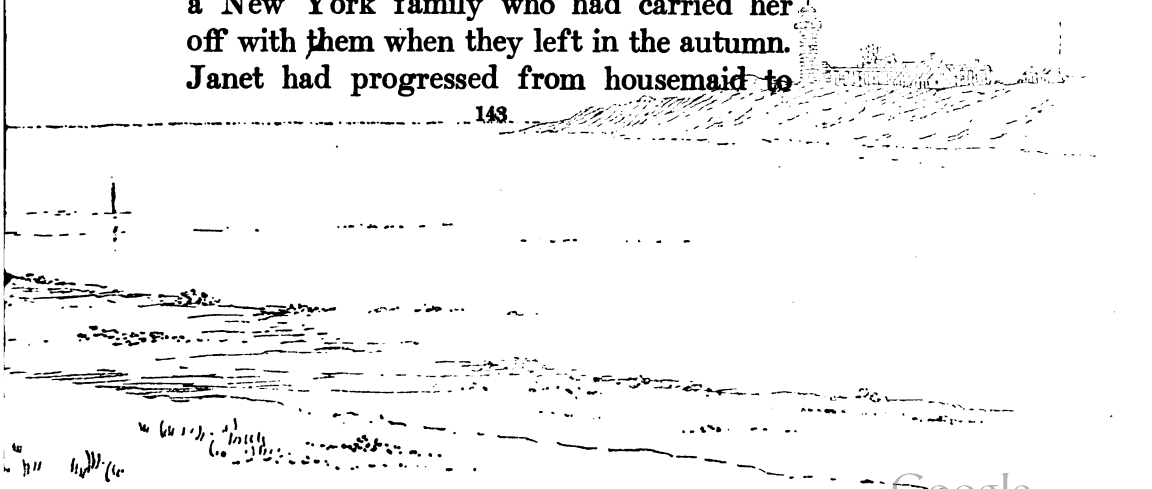
at the Light, a tall, awkward man of thirty-five or -six with whom courtship was an affair of earnest thought and long meditation. He was slow of speech and easily embarrassed, and during the first few days of Judith's presence at the cottage had almost starved because when she was at the table nothing would stay on his knife and his coffee cup invariably spilled its contents before it reached his lips. He had light brown eyes and a big fair beard, and looked like a gentle, good-natured Viking.

The other member of the family, Janet, waited on table, hurrying quietly and deftly between the dining-room and the kitchen. She resembled her mother, but was taller than Mrs. Poggs had ever been, and her prettiness was of a heavier type. Janet was twenty-four and had been earning her own living for seven years. She had started as waitress at the summer hotel across the harbor, and had there met the attention of a New York family who had carried her off with them when they left in the autumn. Janet had progressed from housemaid to





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lady's maid, and two years before had entered Judith's service. She had been christened Jennie, but realizing the advantages of a less ordinary name, she had changed it to Janet, a proceeding which won no sympathy from her father.

"Might as well call yourself Margue*reet,* an' be done with it," he grumbled.

But Jennie or Janet, she was an excellent maid, clever, respectful and self-respecting, and Judith thought her a treasure.

The dinner was plain and well-cooked, and Tom did full justice to it. Just to have had Judith across the table from him, to have been able to look at her to his heart's content, would have made a repast of bread and water seem to him like a royal banquet. The salt codfish with which she had threatened him appeared as a side-dish, while as for the boiled cabbage, Tom hadn't known before that it was so good. The conversation was general, only Mister Dixon remaining mute. He kept his eyes on his plate for the most part and plied his knife with a diligence and skill that aroused

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Tom's secret admiration. The Captain harked back to Judith's rescue in the fog and obtained a good deal of amusement out of it.

"Too bad," he said, reminiscently, "'twarn't like that fog we had here two or three summers ago. You remember, Dixon?"

Dixon nodded soberly.

"That was a fog as was a fog, Mr. Randall. There was three days of it, and on the third day it was so thick you could walk on it without getting your feet wet. Aaron Bowles walked from the Cut right over to town across the harbor, bought a plug of tobacco and walked back again. Saw the tobacco myself, sir."

"Yes, and I dare say you *had* some of it," said Mrs. Poggs tartly. At which the Captain threw his head back and laughed loudly and Mister Dixon grinned at his plate.

After dinner Tom persuaded Judith to sit with him on the bench in front of the cottage, but she only stayed a little while



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and no effort of his could bring things back to where they had been before dinner. Judith was very amiable, very polite, but not at all the same Judith that had fled mockingly from him at the lighthouse. Tom's spirits ebbed and his conversational powers dwindled until, after they had sat silent for almost a minute, Judith arose and pleaded the necessity of writing letters.

"But you are coming sailing with me to-morrow afternoon?" he pleaded.

"Oh, yes," she replied, calmly, "if the weather is nice, and it won't interfere with your plans."

"I haven't any," he said, moodily. "And if I had——"

"Then I'll look for you at about half-past three. Will that do?"

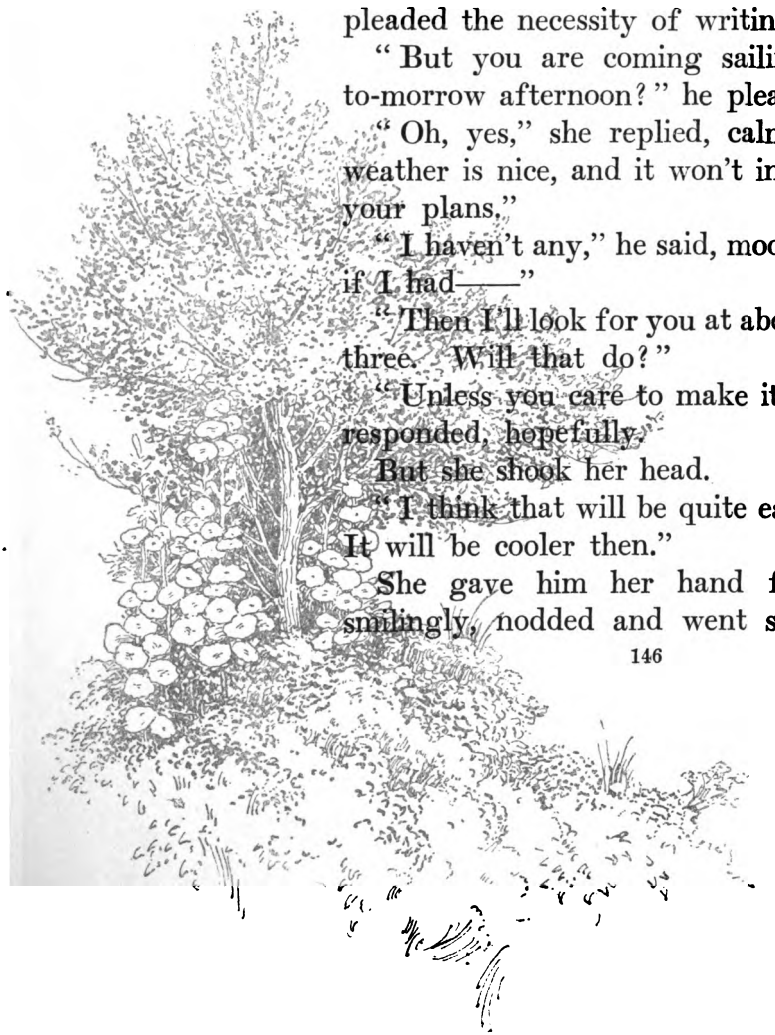
"Unless you care to make it earlier," he responded, hopefully.

But she shook her head.

"I think that will be quite early enough. It will be cooler then."

She gave him her hand frankly and smilingly, nodded and went sedately into





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the house. Tom thrust his straw hat on to the back of his head, stuck his hands in his pockets, and walked somberly down to the landing.

That evening he went to the telegraph office and sent a message to the florist in Boston. That cheered him up and he smoked quite happily in the cockpit of the *Vagrant* until the clock in the town hall sent ten sonorous strokes echoing over the water.

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## X.

When the *Vagrant* bore him across to the island the next afternoon it also bore a huge box of roses. Judith had not come down when he reached the cottage and he sent the offering up by Janet, and sat down on the bench to wait.

Presently Janet returned with a sealed envelope.

"Miss Judith found this with the roses, sir. It's addressed to you."

Tom took it. It was from the florist:

"We have your telegraph order for three dozen Blarney roses. We do not have the Blarney and so are sending three dozen Killarneys instead, trusting that they will meet your approval."

When Judith came down she thanked him graciously for his gift, explaining, as Tom's gaze sought the roses without finding them, that she hadn't carried any since they wouldn't suit her blue gown.



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"If I'd known that," he said, regretfully, "I'd have ordered blue ones."

They went down to the landing and embarked, Tom telling himself ruefully that he must have dreamed or imagined yesterday's incident beside the lighthouse. For to-day Judith was very self-composed, very dignified, very distant. And although for two hours the *Vagrant* bore them blithely over the water, and he had her quite to himself, with not even the collie for rival, his wooing didn't prosper. Judith held the conversation with a firm hand to the most impersonal topics, not only impersonal but, in Tom's judgment, uninteresting. She displayed a strange curiosity regarding Miss Judith Sypher and quite exhausted Tom's fund of knowledge and conjecture regarding that young lady. Of course, since her own name was Judith, she might be excused a certain interest in Tom's Judy, but Tom felt with some pique that she was overdoing it, especially as there were so many more enthralling matters to discuss. In fact, his enthusiasm for



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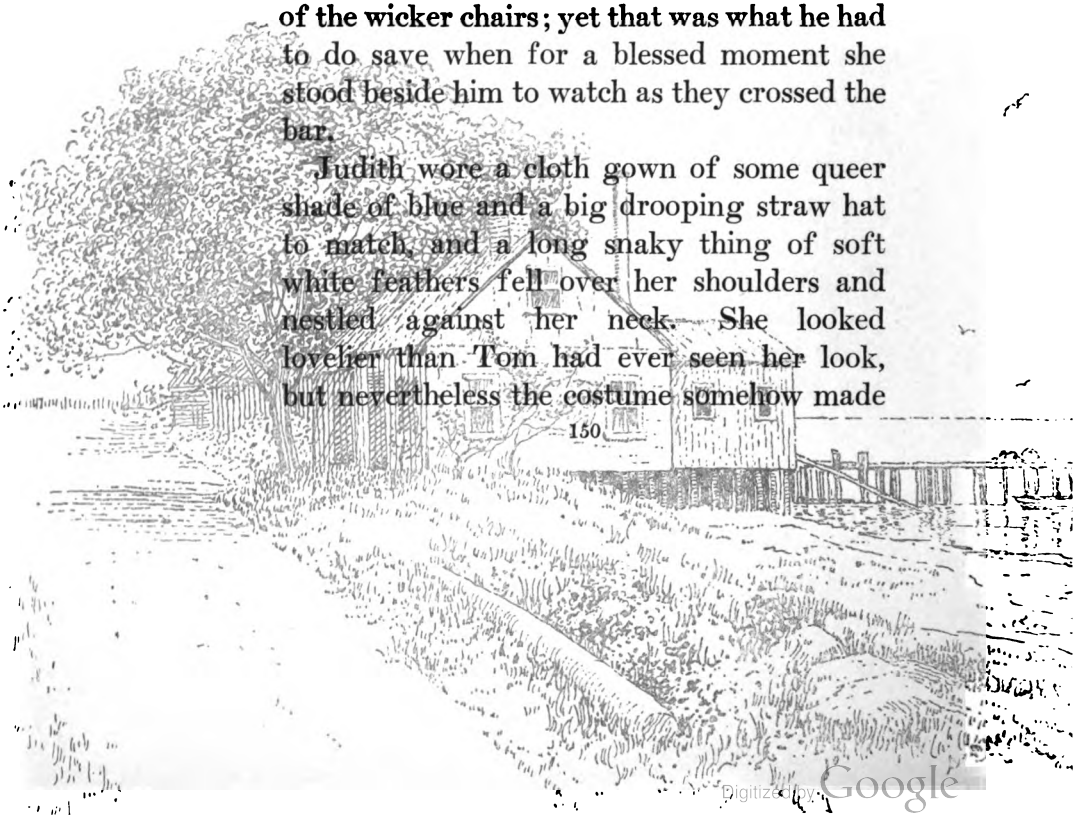
Judy Sypher suffered a decline for the moment.

Afterwards he discovered that they were talking about the Denver Northern and Pacific Railroad and the construction work in Cold Creek Canyon; about the tunnelling and the treatment of the laborers, and what precautions it was possible to take against accidents. Judith seemed to find all this intensely interesting, but Tom was certain that such affairs had never appealed to him less. It was something of a handicap, too, to be forced to remain at the wheel while Judith reclined in the farthest of the wicker chairs; yet that was what he had to do save when for a blessed moment she stood beside him to watch as they crossed the bar.

Judith wore a cloth gown of some queer shade of blue and a big drooping straw hat to match, and a long snaky thing of soft white feathers fell over her shoulders and nestled against her neck. She looked lovelier than Tom had ever seen her look, but nevertheless the costume somehow made





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THE COSTUME SOMEHOW MADE FOR FORMALITY

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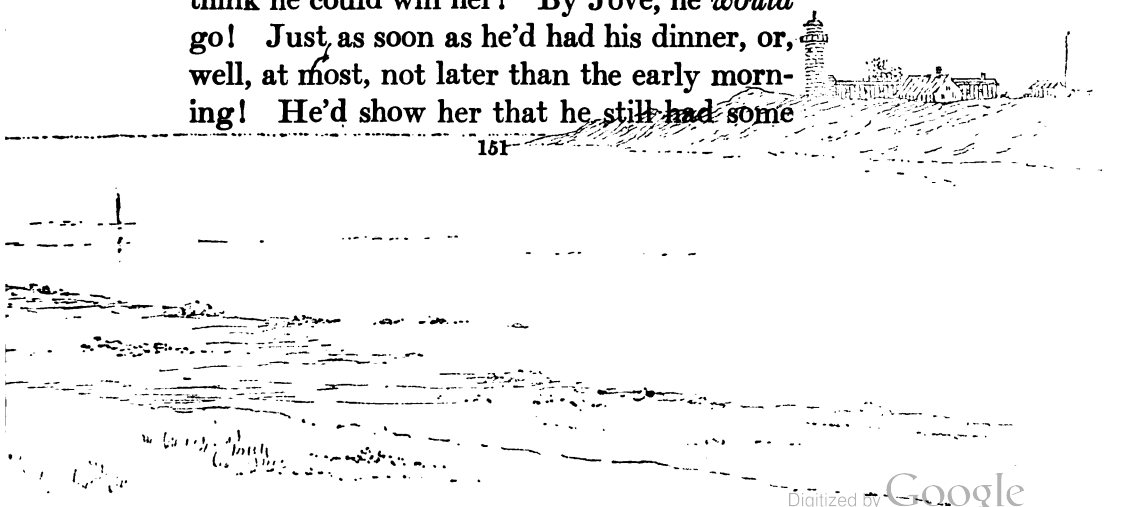
for formality and aloofness, and Tom wondered dazedly how he had ever had the courage to clasp her in his arms as he had yesterday. He was happy and miserable at the same time; happy because he could watch her and listen to her, miserable because she seemed so supremely unapproachable, unattainable.

And almost before he knew it she was back in the little white cottage under the light and he was chugging across the harbor to his anchorage. And the day had been a frightful failure and he was half minded to turn the *Vagrant's* bow toward the open sea and put as many leagues of water as was possible between himself and this tormentful lady. If he had the sense of a horned-toad, he assured himself contemptuously, he'd do it. What use was it to stay here and be miserable? He had been several well-defined varieties of a fool to ever think he could win her! By Jove, he *would* go! Just as soon as he'd had his dinner, or, well, at most, not later than the early morning! He'd show her that he still had some





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spunk in him. Perhaps she'd be a little bit sorry when she learned that he had gone without even a word of farewell. Tom found a deal of comfort in that possibility. The principal drawback was that he would never know for certain whether she had been sorry or not!

But after dinner, which he ate at the little white hotel on Harbor Street, with the morning paper propped against the messy catsup bottle, he returned to the *Vagrant* in a more tolerant and cheerful frame of mind. He lighted his pipe and put his feet up on the rail, and stared across at the dim island and watched the white light in the tower and a tiny yellow light in the cottage. The yellow light should be, even if it was not, the light in her window. There were other lights all around him, lights on the wharves, lights on the boats at anchor, cold blue lights from the arcs in town, and distant, twinkling lights from ledges and headlands. But it was the yellow light that held his gaze and focussed his thoughts. Perhaps, after all,



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he told himself now, she had not meant to be unkind. He couldn't expect her to throw herself into his arms! And she *had* been kind, so many times! Pshaw! Why, he'd be the biggest sort of an idiot to give up now! The idea was nonsensical. What if he hadn't made progress yet? There still remained five days of his week of grace. Yes, and beyond this week were hundreds of other weeks; he hadn't agreed to take her answer as final; as long as she remained unmarried there was hope for him! Of course it would be a bit difficult to make love to her while she was in the East and he was in Cold Creek Canyon, Colorado, but by November operations would cease there and he could take a run back to New York. A wonderful place, New York, since it was her home. He felt that he had never half done the city justice. He wondered who she was for the hundredth time. What was her name? Why was she visiting on Sweetwater Island? Why did she choose to keep him in the dark? Now and then the thought that perhaps she was



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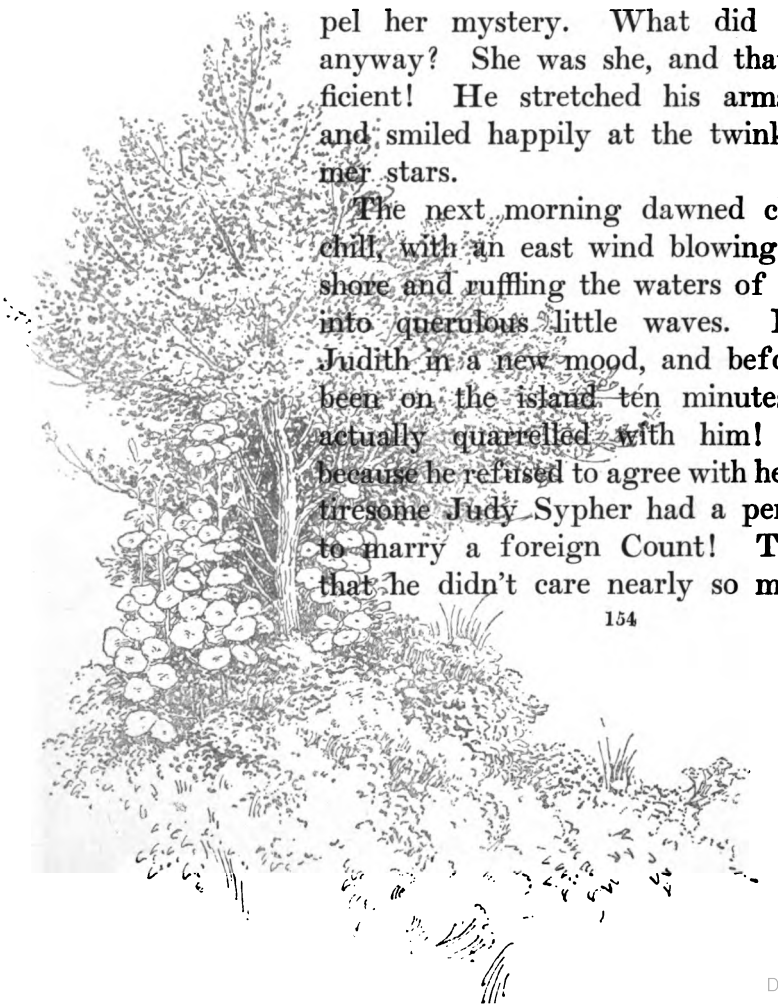
already married and that she was merely amusing herself with him assailed him like the swift prick of a dagger. But he always laughed it away the next instant. He believed that Janet might be bribed to throw light on the subject, but he realized that it would be unfair if not absolutely dishonest to seek information that way. No, he would wait until Judith was ready to dispel her mystery. What did it matter, anyway? She was she, and that was sufficient! He stretched his arms, yawned and smiled happily at the twinkling summer stars.

The next morning dawned cloudy and chill, with an east wind blowing down the shore and ruffling the waters of the harbor into querulous little waves. He found Judith in a new mood, and before he had been on the island ten minutes she had actually quarrelled with him! And all because he refused to agree with her that that tiresome Judy Sypher had a perfect right to marry a foreign Count! Tom found that he didn't care nearly so much as he





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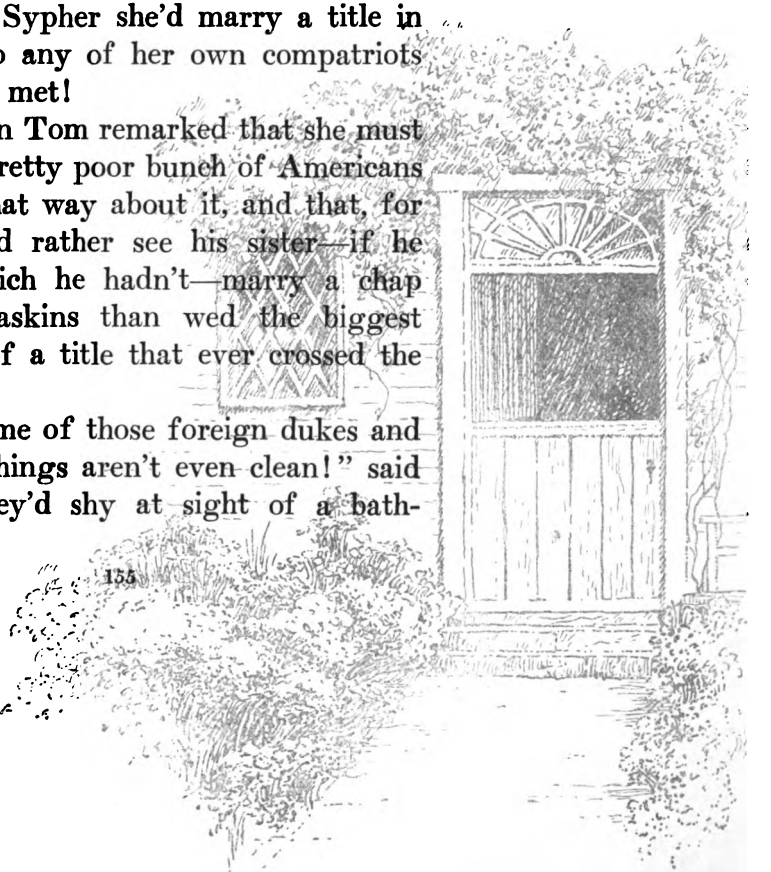
had whether Judy married a foreigner or an American or didn't marry at all; that personally the matter had small interest for him at present; but he remained firm to his convictions and quoted Jim Haskins on the subject of Foreign Alliances for America's Fairest Daughters until Judith told him flatly that Jim Haskins was an odious person and didn't know what he was talking about. And that if—if she were Judith Sypher she'd marry a title in preference to any of her own compatriots she had ever met!

Whereupon Tom remarked that she must have met a pretty poor bunch of Americans if she felt that way about it, and that, for his part, he'd rather see his sister—if he had one, which he hadn't—marry a chap like Jim Haskins than wed the biggest blackguard of a title that ever crossed the water.

"Why, some of those foreign dukes and counts and things aren't even clean!" said Tom. "They'd shy at sight of a bath-tub!"





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"That's not so," answered Judith, warmly. "You don't know what you are talking about. Count Salzstadt is much more particular about cleanliness and neatness than most of the men I've met on this side."

"Who's he?" asked Tom. "Who's this Count—Count——"

"Count Salzstadt's the man that—that your Judy Sypher is going to marry," she replied, hotly.

"You seem to know a lot about him," he said, in disapproval. "Have you met him?"

"I know what I've heard," she replied, with returning caution.

"You hear all sorts of things," he said, carelessly. "I've heard that a Greaser has a soul, but I've never believed it."

"You're very impolite!" cried Judith.

"I didn't mean to be, honest, Miss Judith. But, look here now, why are you so keen about Judy marrying this Count Thingaboo? That's what I don't see."

"There are a great many things you

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don't see," she answered, mockingly. Tom frowned, suspecting a hidden meaning.

"I suppose there are," he said, finally. "And some I don't want to. And one of them is a nice girl like Judy Sypher throwing herself away on a titled adventurer like this Count fellow."

"He's not an adventurer," said Judith, coldly. "And whether he is or not I fancy Miss Sypher will marry him. And I don't believe she will care a bit whether you and Mr. Haskins approve."

"I don't suppose she will. She won't know, for one thing. But I'll bet you anything that if she had a mother she wouldn't do any such fool stunt!"

For once Judith had no answer ready. And when, presently, Tom looked around at her he saw that she had turned her head quite away from him and that one hand was dabbing a tiny bunch of white handkerchief to her eyes.

"Miss Judith," he cried, in dismay and consternation, "I'm awfully sorry if I said



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anything to hurt you, honest I am! I'm a perfect brute! Now, look here——"

Judith turned upon him in a blaze of wrath.

"How could you say anything to hurt me, pray?" she cried. "You're just mean and tiresome, and I wish you'd go away and let me alone!"

Tom stared a moment and then arose from the bench.

"I'm sorry," he said, quietly. "I've offended you, how I don't know, and I offer humble apologies, Miss Judith."

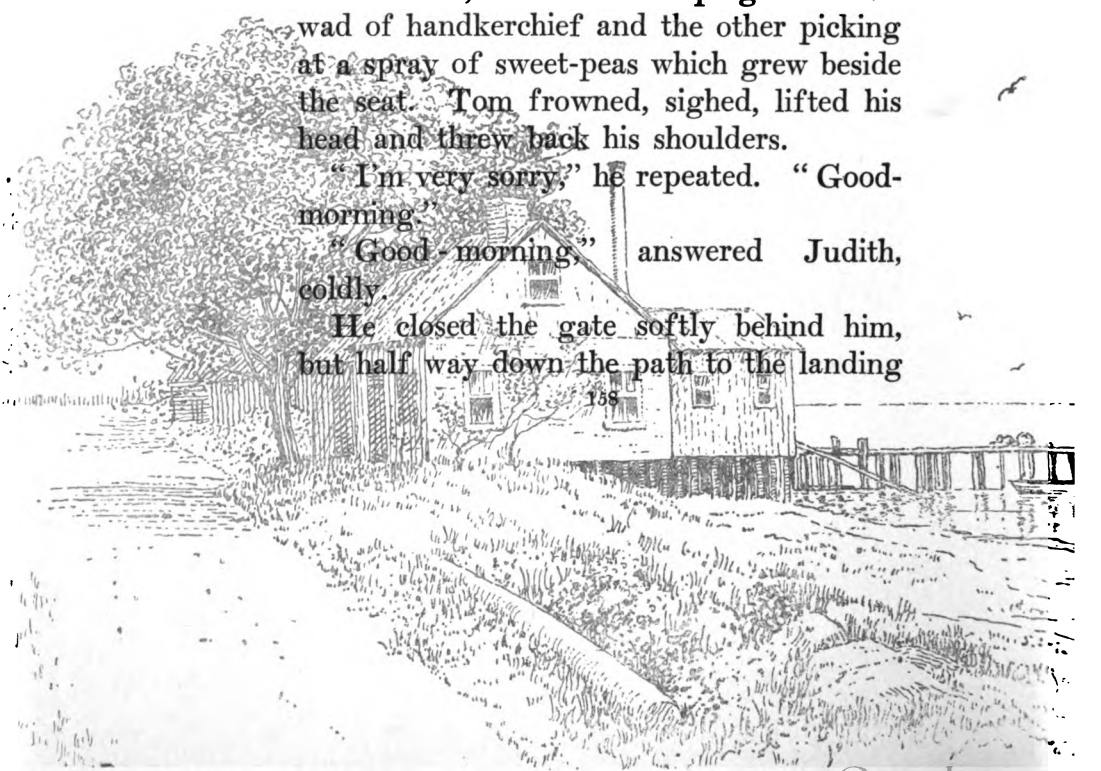
There was no reply. Judith sat with bowed head, one hand clasping the little wad of handkerchief and the other picking at a spray of sweet-peas which grew beside the seat. Tom frowned, sighed, lifted his head and threw back his shoulders.

"I'm very sorry," he repeated. "Good-morning."

"Good-morning," answered Judith, coldly.

He closed the gate softly behind him, but half way down the path to the landing





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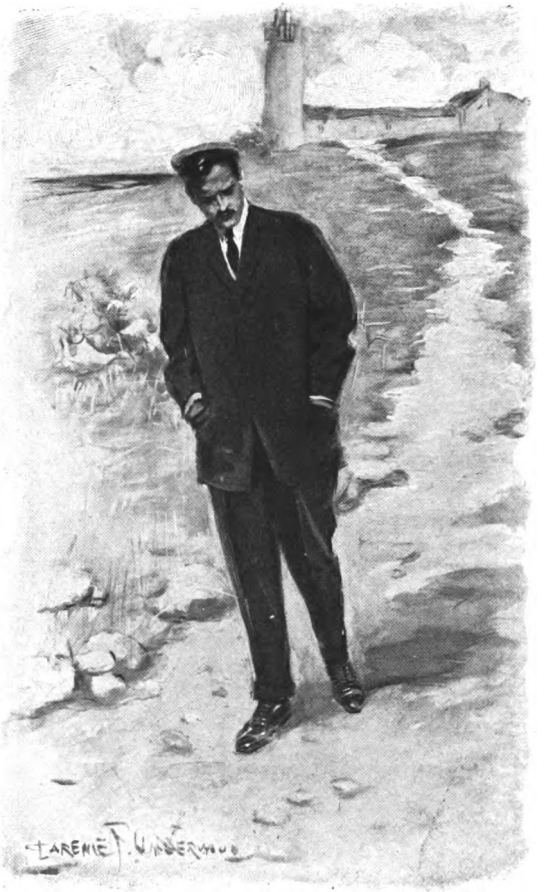

HALF WAY DOWN THE PATH TO THE LANDING HE ENCOUNTERED A STONE

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he encountered a stone and the way in which he kicked that down the bank told its own story. His foot sustained the worst in the encounter, but he didn't notice it.

When he had passed from sight Judith dabbed her eyes again, looked after him for a moment and then went slowly up the stairs to her room. The *Vagrant* was already in motion and Tom was at the wheel with his back to the island. And all the way across the harbor not once did he so much as glance over his shoulder. Judith knew because she watched, watched until the launch grew indistinguishable amongst the shipping. Then she laid herself on the bed and cried, cried, as she told herself, because she was nervous and had a headache—or was going to have one.

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## XI.

WELL, of course it was all over! Tom assured himself of that several times on the way to his anchorage. There was nothing to do now save write her a note of apology and farewell and return to Gloucester and the probably highly impatient Ferris. Then, as soon as he could get away, he'd back-trail for Cold Creek Canyon and get down to work again. After all, work was the best thing in life and a fellow was an ass to think otherwise. So he spent the rest of the forenoon in getting ready for departure and in writing the note to Judith. That proved a difficult task and he destroyed half a dozen sheets of his friend's expensive paper, adorned with the crossed flags of the *Vagrant* and her Yacht Club, before he succeeded. Even then the result wasn't just what he could have wished it. In the first place, "Dear Madam" sounded absurd, just as though he was going on to write: "I beg to advise you that

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my Spring Opening will take place," etc. But, on the other hand, "My dear Miss Judith" sounded over-friendly, and of course he couldn't address her by her last name, for he didn't know it. So he compromised on "My dear Madam." And then, "As I am leaving in a few moments," he wrote, "I am taking the liberty of addressing you in these few lines to thank you for your kindness and to say good-bye. And I want to repeat my apologies of this morning. I am still in the dark as to the nature of my offence, and assure you that it was quite unintentional. I hope you will believe this and pardon the fault. With sincere wishes for your future happiness, Very truly, THOMAS RANDALL." To "Miss Judith, Care Capt. Poggs."

He sealed and addressed the epistle, after the sixth perusal of it, and laid it on the seat in the cockpit; it would probably be necessary to hire some one to take it over to the island. Then he got his luncheon on board and ate it in the cabin. When he went on deck again the wind had died out



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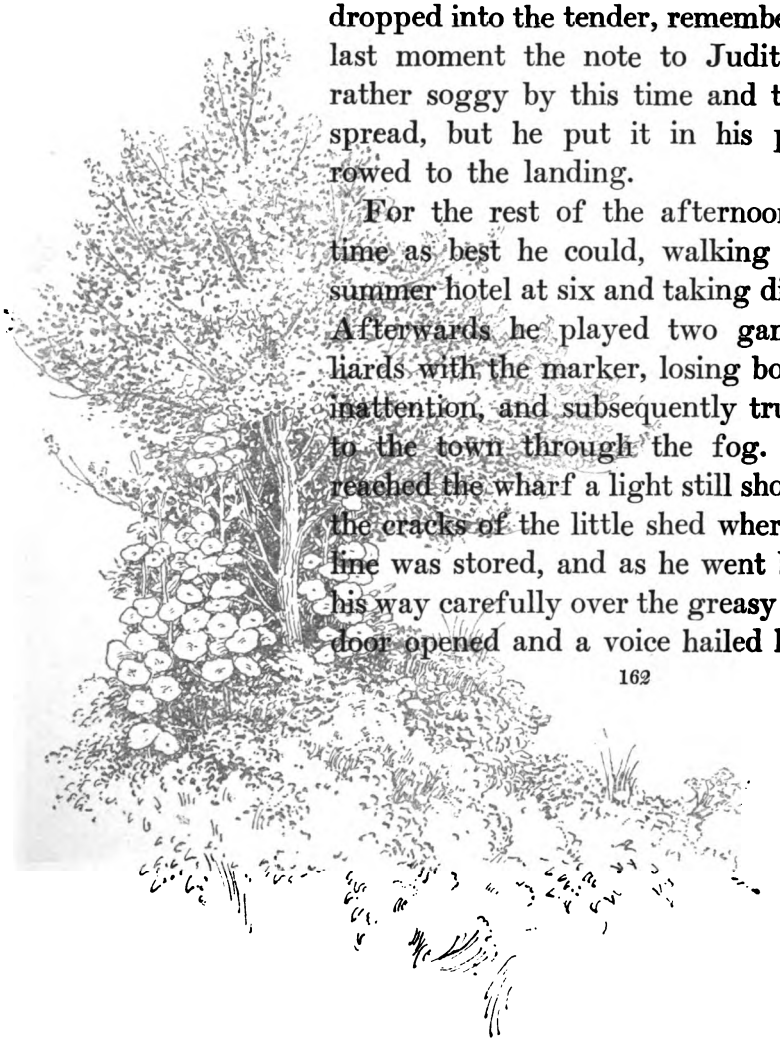
and Sweetwater Island had vanished. A heavy bank of fog was rolling in from the south-east and already the fog-bell had commenced its tolling. To leave to-day was out of the question. Tom resigned himself to a postponement of his departure. He closed the ports, stowed the awning and dropped into the tender, remembering at the last moment the note to Judith. It was rather soggy by this time and the ink had spread, but he put it in his pocket and rowed to the landing.

For the rest of the afternoon he killed time as best he could, walking out to the summer hotel at six and taking dinner there. Afterwards he played two games of billiards with the marker, losing both through inattention, and subsequently trudged back to the town through the fog. When he reached the wharf a light still shone through the cracks of the little shed where the gasoline was stored, and as he went by, picking his way carefully over the greasy planks, the door opened and a voice hailed him.





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"That you, Mr. Randall?" asked the wharf-tender.

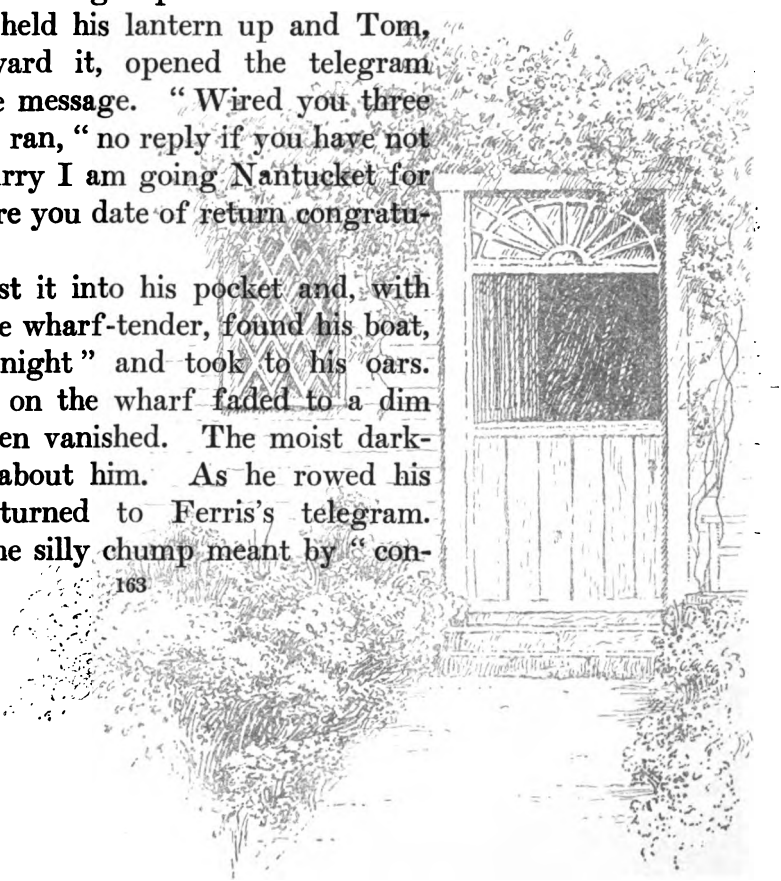
"Yes; good-night to you, Captain."

"Wait a little, sir; here's a telegram a boy left for you this afternoon. I thought likely it was important and so I waited down for you."

"Why, that was kind of you," answered Tom, "but you shouldn't have troubled. I dare say it's nothing important."

The man held his lantern up and Tom, bending toward it, opened the telegram and read the message. "Wired you three days ago," it ran, "no reply if you have not left don't hurry I am going Nantucket for week will wire you date of return congratulations."

Tom thrust it into his pocket and, with the aid of the wharf-tender, found his boat, said "good-night" and took to his oars. The lantern on the wharf faded to a dim glow and then vanished. The moist darkness closed about him. As he rowed his thoughts returned to Ferris's telegram. What had the silly chump meant by "con-





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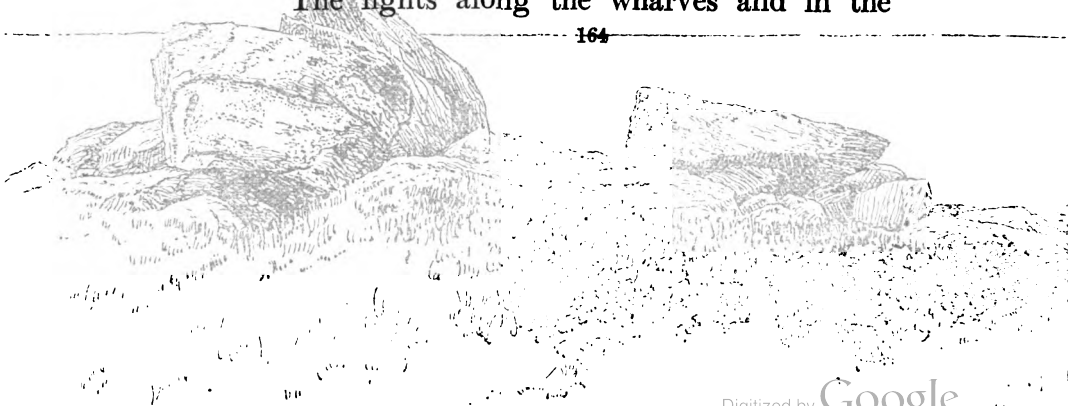
gratulations"? Why should he have added that to his message? Then it dawned on him that Ferris was not offering congratulations to him but intimating that the sender of the message was to be congratulated! Tom chuckled.

"That means that he's engaged to her," he thought. "It was just a quarrel, then, and she didn't throw him down. Well, I'm glad he's made good with her. I'll send him a wire to-morrow. How can I, though, when I don't know his address?"

Then he rested on his oars and peered around him in the darkness, with a sudden uneasiness. By this time he should have reached the *Vagrant*. He wished he had thought to light the lantern before he left. Why, hang it, he might have to search all night for the boat! He had no more idea where he was now than—than——! He stopped rowing and listened. From one direction came the melancholy sound of the fog-bell, from another the distant hoot of a locomotive. Nothing else was to be heard. The lights along the wharves and in the





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town were completely hidden by the fog. Well, it was foolish to row around here in the darkness in the hope of bumping against the *Vagrant;* it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack; the best thing to do was to make a landing along shore and go to the hotel for the night. He swung the tender around and pulled cautiously for several minutes. But no lights appeared. The fog-bell was over his right shoulder. That was all wrong. He turned the tender again and set off on a new course. Another five minutes or so passed and he laid down his oars with a laugh of mingled amusement and exasperation. It was absurd to be lost like this within a stone-throw of the shore!

He lighted a match and looked at his watch. The time was twenty minutes of eleven. No wonder, then, that he heard no sounds from shore; Greenhaven went early to bed. The match flickered out and he put away his watch. Then, locating the fog-bell again—it had in some way worked around in front of him—he pulled toward where the wharves should be. After awhile



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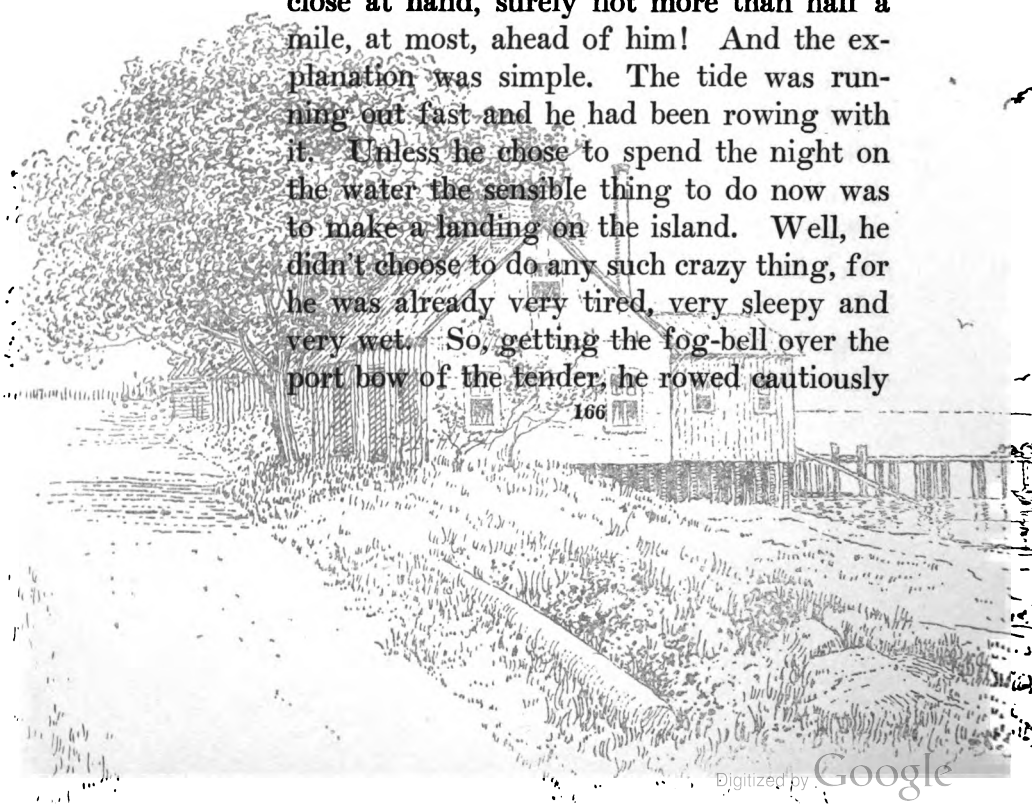
he thought he could discern a glow that might mean a lantern, but by the time he had turned the tender's stub-nose around he had lost it. Thoroughly vexed by this time, he settled down at the rowing.

"I'll keep on until I hit something," he told himself, grimly, "whether it's Greenhaven or the coast of Africa."

After awhile he paused to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. So far he hadn't hit a thing. He pulled in the oars and rested. And suddenly it came to him that the fog-bell was strangely loud. He listened. *"Ding-dong!"* Why, it was close at hand, surely not more than half a mile, at most, ahead of him! And the explanation was simple. The tide was running out fast and he had been rowing with it. Unless he chose to spend the night on the water the sensible thing to do now was to make a landing on the island. Well, he didn't choose to do any such crazy thing, for he was already very tired, very sleepy and very wet. So, getting the fog-bell over the port bow of the tender, he rowed cautiously





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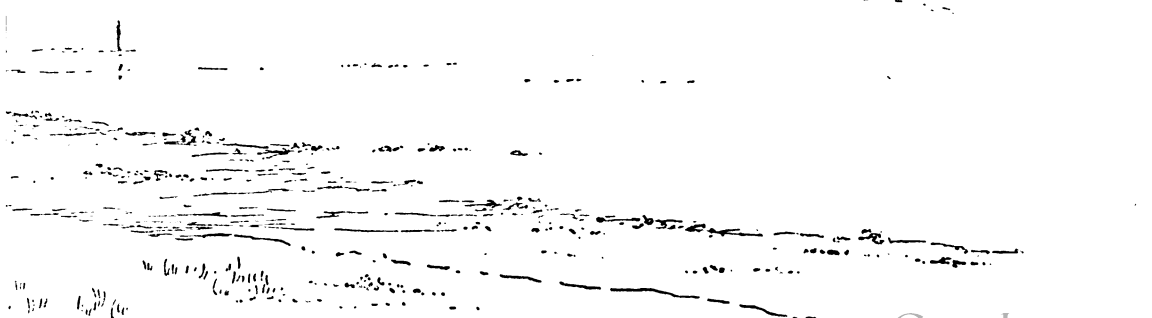
into the darkness. Scarcely three minutes later the tender grated and stopped and Tom scrambled to the bow and sounded with his oar. It felt like a beach, although it might be only a sand bar some distance from shore. But he couldn't recall any such bar on the harbor side of the island and he decided to risk it. So, with the painter in one hand, he jumped out into a foot of water.

It was all right. In an instant he had dry ground underfoot and was hauling the tender up. He seemed to be on a beach of coarse sand and gravel that afforded poor footing, and it was no mean task to pull the boat up. But finally he got it above what he judged to be high-water mark, and thrusting an oar into the gravel as best he could, he tied the painter around it. Then he set off in the direction of the fog-bell and the lighthouse—and Judith. He was heartily glad that he had not sent that note, and put his hand in his pocket to make sure it was still there. He would have felt rather small had he turned up to breakfast in the





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morning after bidding her an eternal farewell!

He fell over bushes and tripped over ledges, climbed up and scrambled down, and muttered unpleasant things about the island's topography. But he kept the tolling bell in front of him and after what seemed at least half an hour and was probably a scanty five minutes, he ran into a picket fence.

Captain George was pouring lubricating oil from a five-gallon reservoir into one of the little long-nosed cans on the table at the foot of the spiral staircase when Tom opened the passage door. The Captain looked surprised, but all he said was:

"Well, out rather late, ain't you, Mr. Randall?"

Tom told his story and the Captain chuckled.

"So if you'll give me a blanket and a corner, Captain," ended Tom, "I'll be very much obliged. Seems to me I must have rowed all over that old harbor to-night."

"Oh, I cal'late I can do better than that

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TOM, SHOES IN HAND, FOLLOWED HIM SOFTLY UP THE CREAKING STAIRWAY

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for you, sir," answered Captain George. "You just come along into the house."

"I'd rather you didn't wake Mrs. Poggs up, Captain. Why not let me bunk here in the passage? The fact is, I'd just as lief you didn't say anything to anyone about my being here."

"Fiddlesticks!" said the Captain, good-naturedly. "You can't sleep here on the floor. You come with me; I've got a place for you. There's a cot under the stairs and it won't take two minutes to set it up in Dixon's room. He'll be getting up about two o'clock, but I guess he won't disturb you much, Mr. Randall. You come right along, sir."

So Tom followed him down the sloping passage and into the kitchen. There was a fire in the range, and while the Captain tiptoed upstairs Tom took off his wet shoes and stockings and dried his feet. The Captain returned in a few minutes.

"This way, sir," he whispered, and Tom, shoes in hand, followed him softly up the creaking stairway. When they reached



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the hall above Tom found that his heart was beating with a rapidity that the steep ascent didn't altogether explain. Four doors opened from the narrow passage. One was ajar, emitting a faint light as though from a candle, while beneath another a yellow streak suggested that the occupant was still awake. He wondered if that was Judith's room; something whispered to him that it was. The Captain had tiptoed ahead and passed through the open door at the end of the hall. Tom paused and felt in his pocket for the note. He would slip it under the door and be off in the morning before she was up. Only—well, in that case, he reflected ruefully, he wouldn't see her! And he wanted to see her again, just once, just once——

The door in front of him opened suddenly, a flood of light burst upon him, and Judith, Judith in soft blue folds and with her hair, drawn smoothly back from her forehead, a pale golden halo in the lamplight, was staring at him incredulously, with parted lips and great round eyes. Tom,



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quite as startled as she, stared back, and for a moment their gazes met and held. Then,

"*Tom!*" gasped Judith, and the door shut quickly. He started forward.

"Judith!" he cried, eagerly. "Judith!"

For a moment there was no reply. Then,

"What are you doing here?" she asked, timidly, from beyond the portal.

"I lost my way in the fog," he answered, softly, "and the Captain's putting me up for the night. Judith!"

"Well?"

"You called me Tom! Judith, did you mean it?"

"Good-night," she whispered.

"Judith, did you? Have you forgiven me?"

"Y-yes, I think so. Good-night—Tom!"

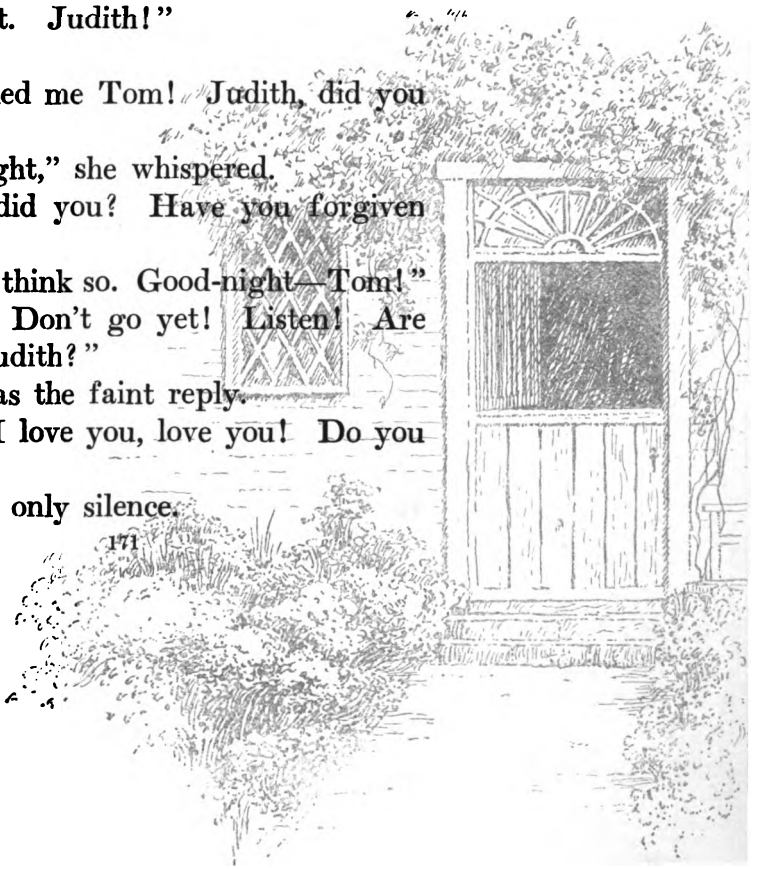
"Judith! Don't go yet! Listen! Are you there, Judith?"

"Yes," was the faint reply.

"Judith, I love you, love you! Do you hear?"

There was only silence.





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"Judith!"

"Yes?" The answer was very low, so low that had he not had his face pressed to the door he would never have heard it.

"Did you hear what I said?" whispered Tom, tremblingly, triumphantly.

"Good-night," faltered Judith.

"Good-night—*dear!*" he answered. He heard her steal away from the door. For another minute he stood there gazing at the blank panels, smiling rapturously in the dim passage. Then something like a sob choked him.

"God bless you, dear," he murmured.

Captain George awaited him in the room at the end of the hall. The Captain was chuckling.

"Thought you didn't want folks to know you was here," he said, straightening his old face into sober lines. Tom took the flickering candle from him and glanced around the little white-walled room. Then he sighed softly, ecstatically.

"Captain," he said, "I never knew Heaven looked like this."

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## XII.

Tom awoke with such a warmth of happiness at his heart that during those first few moments in which unconsciousness slipped away from him he wanted nothing better than to just lie there and bask in it. He preferred not to open his eyes, for if he did he would be wide awake and perhaps this happiness was only the afterglow of some delicious dream and would vanish utterly. But memory stirred within him and the events of last night came back to mind. But maybe those, too, were just happenings in a dream! If they were real, then when he opened his eyes he would find himself in a little white-walled room under the sloping roof of the cottage on Sweetwater Island; if everything had been a dream he would discover himself as usual in the cabin of the *Vagrant*. So much then depended on the result of that first look that for a long minute he held his eyes tightly shut, fearful of disillusion and disappointment.



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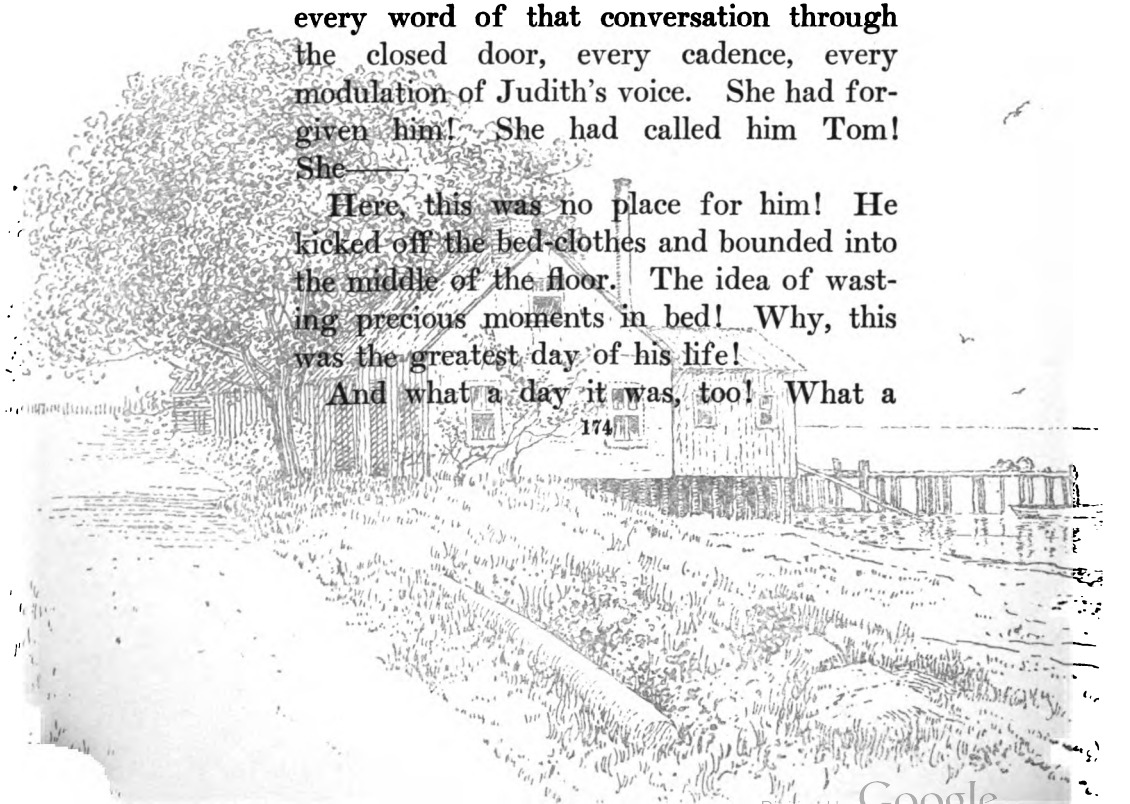
Then, screwing his courage up, he opened one eye slightly, with some hazy idea of being able to close it again and regain his present state of uncertainty should the first peek prove unsatisfactory. A hazy whiteness met his experimental gaze. This wasn't the cabin of the *Vagrant!* He moved his head slightly. The whiteness continued. He opened his eye wider, then both of them. An expanse of whitewashed wall and ceiling confronted him. He gave an immense sigh of contentment, and, closing his eyes again, went over the events of the previous evening, striving to recollect every word of that conversation through the closed door, every cadence, every modulation of Judith's voice. She had forgiven him! She had called him Tom! She——

Here, this was no place for him! He kicked off the bed-clothes and bounded into the middle of the floor. The idea of wasting precious moments in bed! Why, this was the greatest day of his life!

And what a day it was, too! What a





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beautiful, unbelievable day! Through the open window the gray fog writhed in, chill and damp. Every article of clothing was moist to the touch and on the sill of the window the drops clustered like gray pearls. Even the ground below, as Tom gazed joyfully out, was indistinct. The waves washed subduedly against the shore and at two-minute intervals the fog-bell clanged dolorously. Tom inhaled great breaths of the dank atmosphere and beamed at the hidden world. What a glorious day!

When he went down stairs, passing Judith's door with reverent footsteps, he found the family at breakfast. A place had been laid for him beside Mister Dixon. Janet was pouring coffee into the big white cups and Tom was sure that nothing had ever smelled as delicious as that coffee. Judith's place was empty and Tom's face fell as he noted it. Perhaps Mrs. Poggs saw it, for after a brisk, "Good-mornin', Mr. Randall," she explained that Miss Judith hadn't slept very well on account of the fog-bell and was going to have her



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breakfast upstairs. Mrs. Poggs beamed sympathetically during the explanation, and so did the Captain and Mister Dixon. It was quite evident that they accepted him as Judith's suitor and wished him well. Tom had to relate his last night's experiences again, which reminded Captain George of a much more remarkable experience which had happened to him back in '87. Tom might have doubted portions of that narrative had not Mister Dixon, like a stolid Greek chorus, authenticated every portion of it as appealed to.

"I cal'late you'll stay with us awhile, Mr. Randall," said Mrs. Poggs, as he arose from the table. "You couldn't possibly find your way across in this fog."

"I suppose it would be difficult," replied Tom. "But I hardly like to thrust myself on you like this. Perhaps by noon——"

"Sakes alive!" said Mrs. Poggs. "You ain't thrustin' nothin'! Why, we're just as pleased as anything to have a visitor, ain't we, George?"

"That's so, Mr. Randall. You make up



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your mind to stay right here until the fog clears. I'll go and look after that boat of yours and bring it around to the landin'."

"I'll go along," said Tom.

While the Captain was getting into his oilskins Tom obtained permission from Mrs. Poggs to help himself to the sweet-peas.

"Take all you want, and welcome," she said, cheerfully. "I do like to see a gentleman wear a flower in his buttonhole, Mr. Randall. Many's the time I've tried to make Captain Poggs wear one when we go to church, but he don't fancy 'em."

The Captain chuckled.

"I'd look like a darned old fool, Marthy," he grunted.

To please Mrs. Poggs Tom slipped one of the sprays into his lapel, but the rest of the moist, fragrant blossoms he laid on the edge of the tray which Janet was preparing to carry upstairs.

"You tell her I sent those, Janet," he whispered.

"Yes, sir," replied Janet, demurely.



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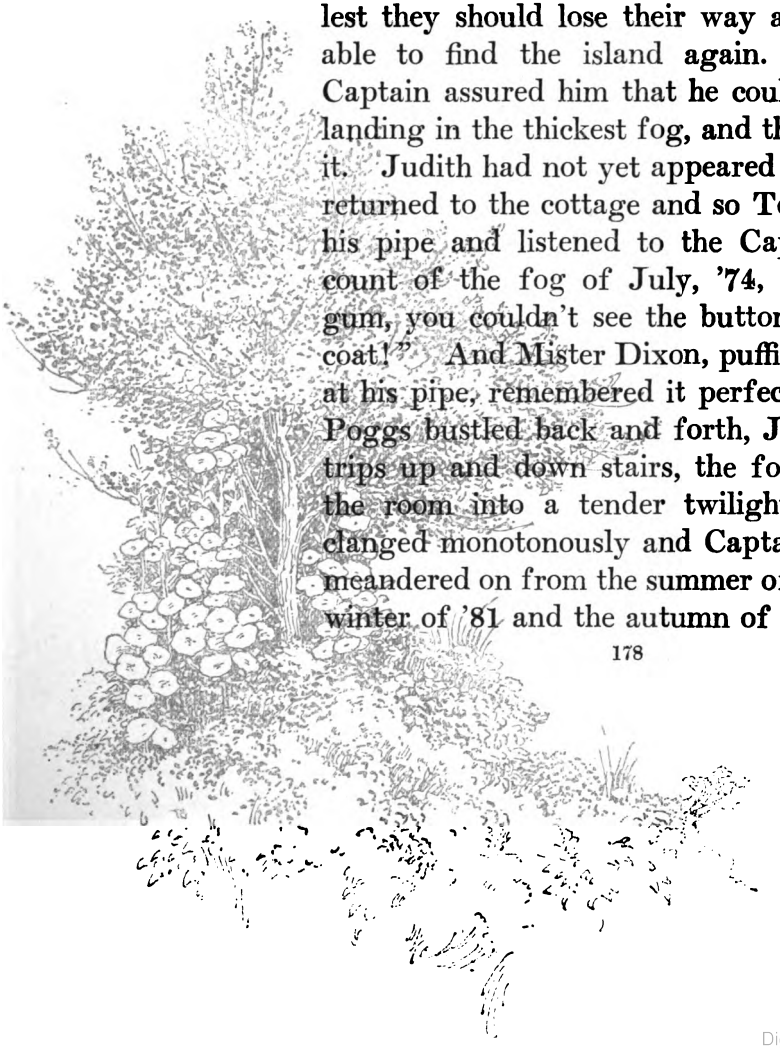
Mrs. Poggs beamed from the kitchen doorway.

"Now ain't that splendid," she sighed.

The Captain led the way unerringly along the shore to where the tender lay, and they got in and started for the landing. A half-dozen strokes of the oars put them out of all sight of land and Tom grew uneasy lest they should lose their way and not be able to find the island again. But the Captain assured him that he could find the landing in the thickest fog, and then proved it. Judith had not yet appeared when they returned to the cottage and so Tom lighted his pipe and listened to the Captain's account of the fog of July, '74, when "by gum, you couldn't see the buttons on your coat!" And Mister Dixon, puffing stolidly at his pipe, remembered it perfectly. Mrs. Poggs bustled back and forth, Janet made trips up and down stairs, the fog plunged the room into a tender twilight, the bell clanged monotonously and Captain George meandered on from the summer of '74 to the winter of '81 and the autumn of '92. Tom





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SO TOM LIGHTED HIS PIPE AND LISTENED TO THE CAPTAIN'S ACCOUNT OF THE FOG OF JULY, '74

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tipped his chair back, watched the smoke curl upward, heard the Captain's voice mingle with the soft *swish* of the waves and the pleasant rattle of the dishes from the kitchen and felt as restful and contented as though in a dream. And then Janet, passing on her way from the floor above to the kitchen, gave him a meaning look as she went by and he tapped the tobacco from his pipe and sat up. The Captain was working the *Elizabeth May* off a lee shore in the neighborhood of Cape Sable in the worst gale of the century when footsteps sounded on the stairs, the door was pushed open and Judith entered.

"Mornin', ma'am," said the Captain, struggling to his feet. "By the jumpin' Jupiter, ma'am, there ain't nothin' like a foggy day to bring the roses out! And I'm mighty glad to see 'em, 'cause I feared that pesky bell would keep you awake."

"Oh, I didn't mind it, Captain," answered Judith, smilingly. "Good-morning, Mr. Dixon."

Mister Dixon smiled broadly, bobbed his



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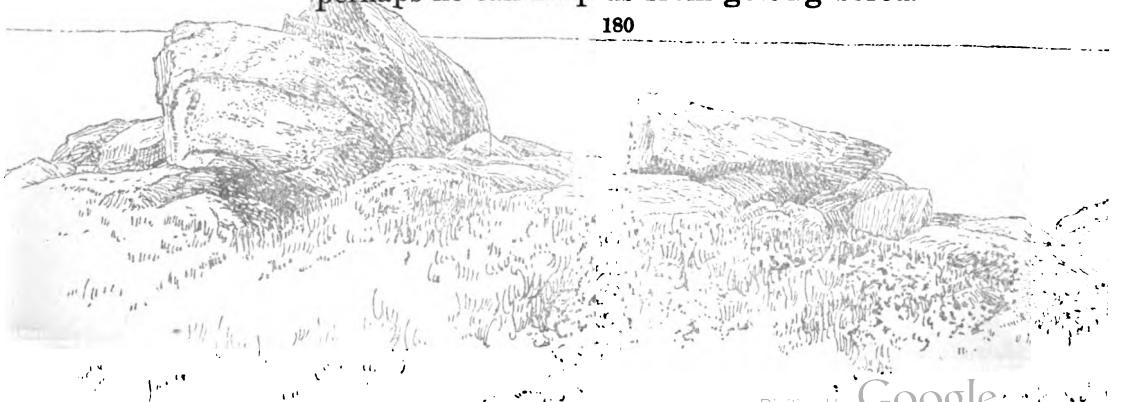
head and then, as though fearful of seeming too familiar, wiped the smile off with the back of one brawny hand. Judith turned to Tom, shot a little glance at him, questioning, smilingly constrained, and dropped her eyes.

"Good-morning, Mr. Randall," she murmured. But Tom was not to be put off so easily. She had to shake hands with him while he begged for assurance that his arrival in the night hadn't disturbed her. And of course she raised her eyes again, while the roses which had awakened the Captain's enthusiasm deepened, and Tom's heart sang for joy. She had dressed herself in a gown of pale mauve linen. A slender chain of amethysts hung about her throat and a bunch of sweet-peas nestled at her waist.

"I'm sure," she said, turning from Tom's ardent regard to Captain George, "it was very thoughtful of Mr. Randall to get shipwrecked on our island, wasn't it? Foggy days are likely to be a little bit dull, and perhaps he can keep us from getting bored.





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What can you do?" she challenged him. "Do you know any card tricks? Can you sing, or recite, or—or dance?"

"I've never been very successful at singing," answered Tom, laughingly, "but I feel this morning that I could do it!"

"Oh, please!" she begged. "Don't let him, Captain, will you? I'm sure he doesn't know how at all."

"As for being shipwrecked," chuckled the Captain, "I've heard his story, but it sounds fishy to me, Miss Judith. How any man could get lost so's he couldn't tell the sound of this bell from the clock on the town hall I don't see!"

"You don't take the fog into consideration, Captain," answered Tom, readily. "It was like that fog back in seventy-four or eighty-six you were telling about, when you couldn't see to button your coat."

Mister Dixon exploded in muffled laughter, and the Captain joined in.

"Got me there, Mr. Randall!" he cried. "Dixon, we ain't no match for young wits.

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'Sides, we've got duties to attend to. We'll be off."

"Eh?" grunted Mister Dixon, blankly.

"I said as we had duties to attend to," repeated the Captain, raising his voice. "Ain't forgot your work, have you? Fog ain't got inside your brain, has it, Dixon?"

"Oh!" said Mister Dixon, getting to his feet with ludicrous haste. "I—I didn't just catch what you said, Captain."

"Huh! You got too much sleep last night, Dixon; that's what's the matter with you." They went out, the Captain making a great show of impatience at his helper's density. Tom watched the door close behind them. Then he turned to Judith with a look of radiant happiness on his face.

"Judith!" he said, eagerly, and sought to take her hands. But she backed off, putting her hands behind her out of temptation's way.

"Yes, Mr. Randall?" she asked, interestedly.

"Mr. Randall!" he mocked. "It was just plain Tom last night, Judith."



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"Really? But I wouldn't think of being so impolite as to call you 'Plain Tom'!"

"You may, though; and I'll call you 'Beautiful Judith.'"

"That wouldn't be true," she answered, shaking her head and retreating to the window. "You know I'm not beautiful, Mr. Randall."

"Not beautiful!" quoth Tom, incredulously. "You're the most beautiful woman in the world, and the dearest, and sweetest——"

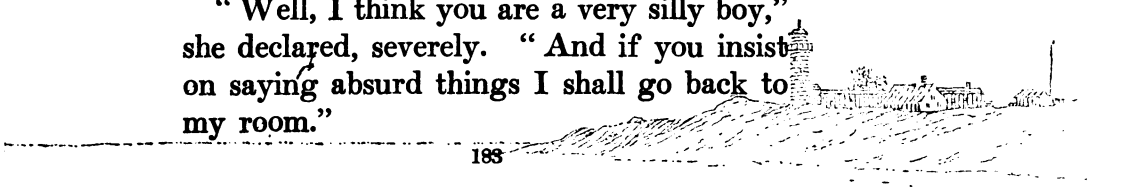
"Hush!" she said, glancing at the closed door of the kitchen. "What would Mrs. Poggs think if she heard you?"

"What do I care what Mrs. Poggs thinks?" said Tom, disdainfully. "I don't care what anyone thinks, but you, Judith!"

"And would you like to know what I think?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, reluctantly.

"Well, I think you are a very silly boy," she declared, severely. "And if you insist on saying absurd things I shall go back to my room."





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"Very well," he sighed. "I'll talk sense."

"Oh, so you acknowledge that what you've been saying is nonsense?"

"I acknowledge nothing of the sort," he answered, stoutly. "And, Judith——"

"Who gave you permission to call me Judith?" she demanded.

"No one; that is——"

"Well?"

"I think my heart did, dear."

Judith's gaze dropped and she turned to the window and the blank wall of fog outside.

"Maybe you'd better stick to—Judith," she said, softly.

It was only a matter of three strides to the window, and Tom covered the distance in record time.

"I'm going to stick to Judith," he whispered, his arms closing about her, "as long as I live."

"Need you stick—so close?" she asked, with a little tremulous laugh.



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"Look at me, dear," he whispered. "Please!"

But she shook her head. His arms tightened and he rained kisses on her hair and against one pink ear until, with a little gasp, she pushed him away. But somehow her hands remained in his as, smiling and blushing, she faced him in the white light from the window.

"Do you know what you've done?" she asked, with sudden gravity.

"I—I——" he stammered, devouring her with his eyes.

"You've made me care for you," she said, meeting his gaze frankly.

"Judith!"

"And you must take the consequences!"

"The consequences!" he laughed, happily. He tried to draw her to him, but she held away.

"You mustn't laugh," she said, soberly. "Perhaps when you hear what they are—— But it doesn't matter; it's too late now! You—you've gone and done it!"

"Yes, dear!"



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"And you must take the consequences," she repeated, with an insistence that sobered him. "You will? You promise you will?"

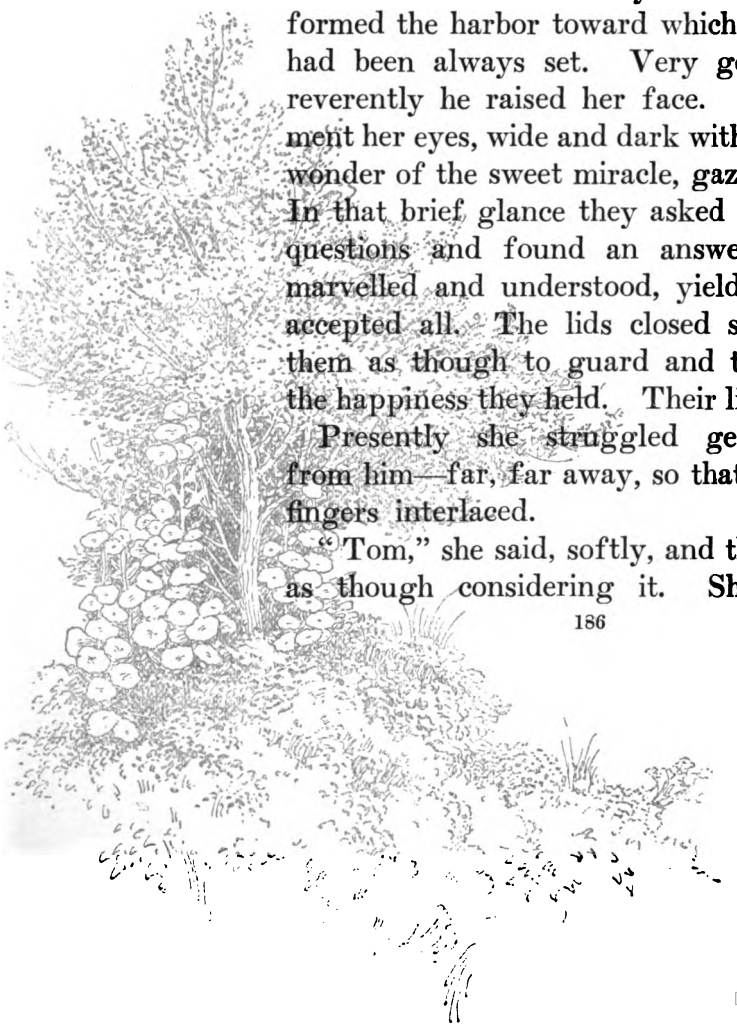
"I promise I will," he said, gravely.

"Then——" A little smile trembled at the corners of her mouth, and the lids fell shyly over the blue-gray eyes. She no longer resisted now, but came to the shelter of his arms as naturally as though they formed the harbor toward which her course had been always set. Very gently, very reverently he raised her face. For a moment her eyes, wide and dark with the happy wonder of the sweet miracle, gazed into his. In that brief glance they asked a thousand questions and found an answer to each, marvelled and understood, yielded all and accepted all. The lids closed slowly over them as though to guard and treasure all the happiness they held. Their lips met. . .

Presently she struggled gently away from him—far, far away, so that only their fingers interlaced.

"Tom," she said, softly, and then paused as though considering it. She laughed





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under her breath and glanced up at him provocatively. "Tom," she repeated, tenderly, as though she loved the sound of the word. "It's a nice name, isn't it?"

"If you like it," he answered, "it's the most beautiful name in the world—save one."

"What is that?" she asked, innocently.

"Judith," he said, slowly, his heart in his voice.

"Oh!" she murmured, contentedly. Then, "If you'd rather, you may call me Judy," she added. "Some folks do."

"Who?" he asked, jealously.

She swung his hands together and clasped them at her throat, smiling provokingly.

"Well, Prue, for one. She's my best friend."

"And who else?" he insisted.

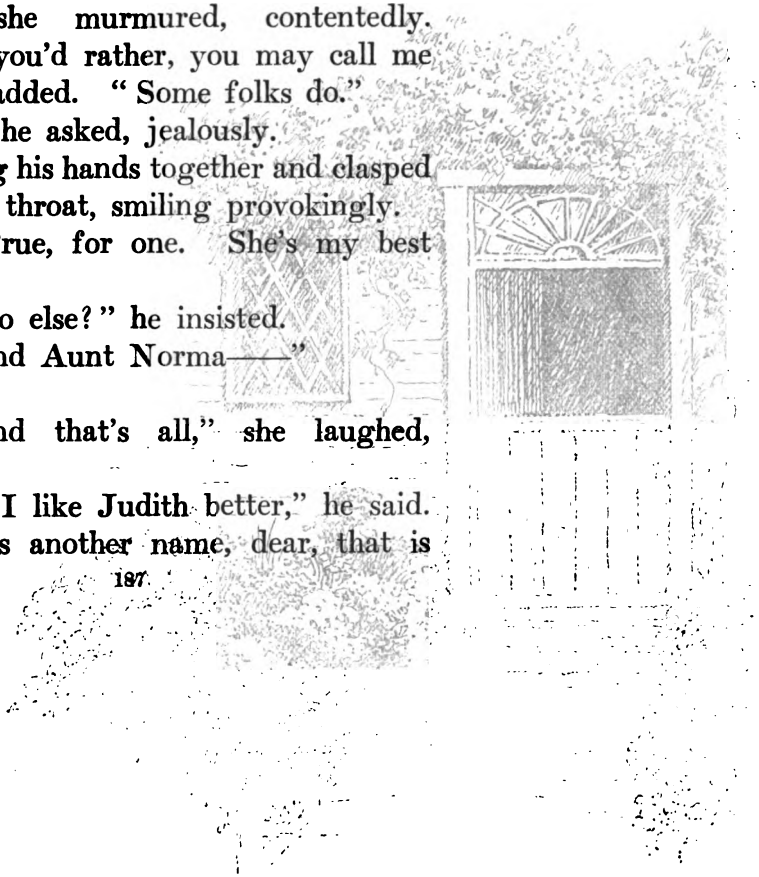
"And—and Aunt Norma——"

"Well?"

"And—and that's all," she laughed, merrily.

"I think I like Judith better," he said. "But there's another name, dear, that is





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sweeter than all, and I want to call you by that. May I?"

"What is it?" she asked, with a little catch in her voice.

"Wife," he whispered. Somehow she was back in his arms again. "May I, dear?"

The head on his breast nodded once.

"Very soon, sweetheart?" he asked.

The head shook negatively.

"How soon?" he pursued.

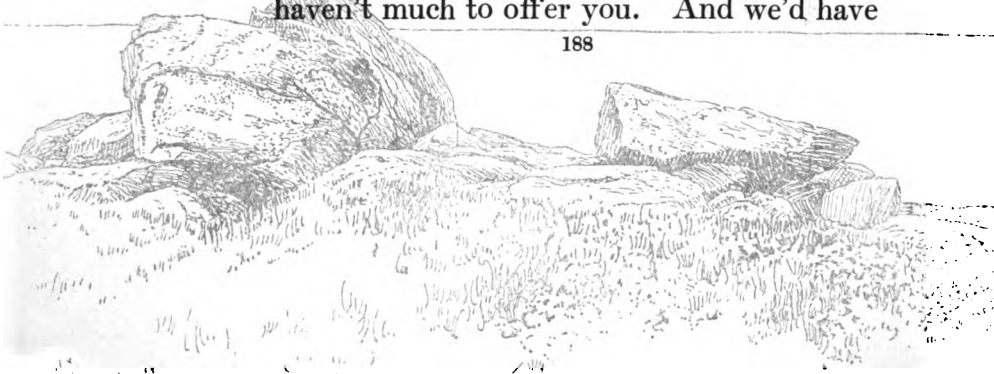
"Let—me—see." She lifted her head and observed him frowningly from the vast distance of six inches. "A year?"

"*Judith!*"

"But think, dear," she said, gently, "of all the years ahead of us. Perhaps some day you'll get tired of me and won't care for me any more, and—and I want to put that off as far as possible," she added, with a tremor. It took Tom fully a minute to thoroughly convince her of the impossibility of such a contingency. Then,

"I'm not rich, dear," he said, "and I haven't much to offer you. And we'd have





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to live in the West—Denver, perhaps. Would you mind that very much?"

"I should like it," she answered, promptly. "If we only could!"

"Why not?" he asked. But she shook her head; and then, seeing his troubled look, she smiled and said lightly:

"Yes, Tom, we will live in Denver, of course. I've heard that it is very nice."

"Well, it isn't as fine as New York, dear, but we wouldn't have to live there forever. I shall have a raise in January, and then, when Rawlins gets out, I'm pretty sure of his place. And living doesn't cost nearly so much in Denver, I guess, as it does in New York. Rents are lots cheaper, of course. We can rent a nice little house——"

"Tom, dear."

"Yes?"

"Please—let's not talk about that yet, if you don't mind."

"Not if you don't want to," he answered, with a note of surprise.

"Because—because," she went on, in a low voice, "you don't know very much about

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me yet, and—and perhaps when you do you won't want to marry me at all!"

"Not want to marry you!" he laughed. "We'll see about that. But you're going to tell me now, aren't you, Judith? About yourself, I mean."

"Yes," she answered, "but—not just yet."

The kitchen door opened and Mrs. Poggs, a red tablecloth over one arm, appeared. But they didn't hear the door open, nor did they hear it softly close again. Judith was looking soberly toward the window.

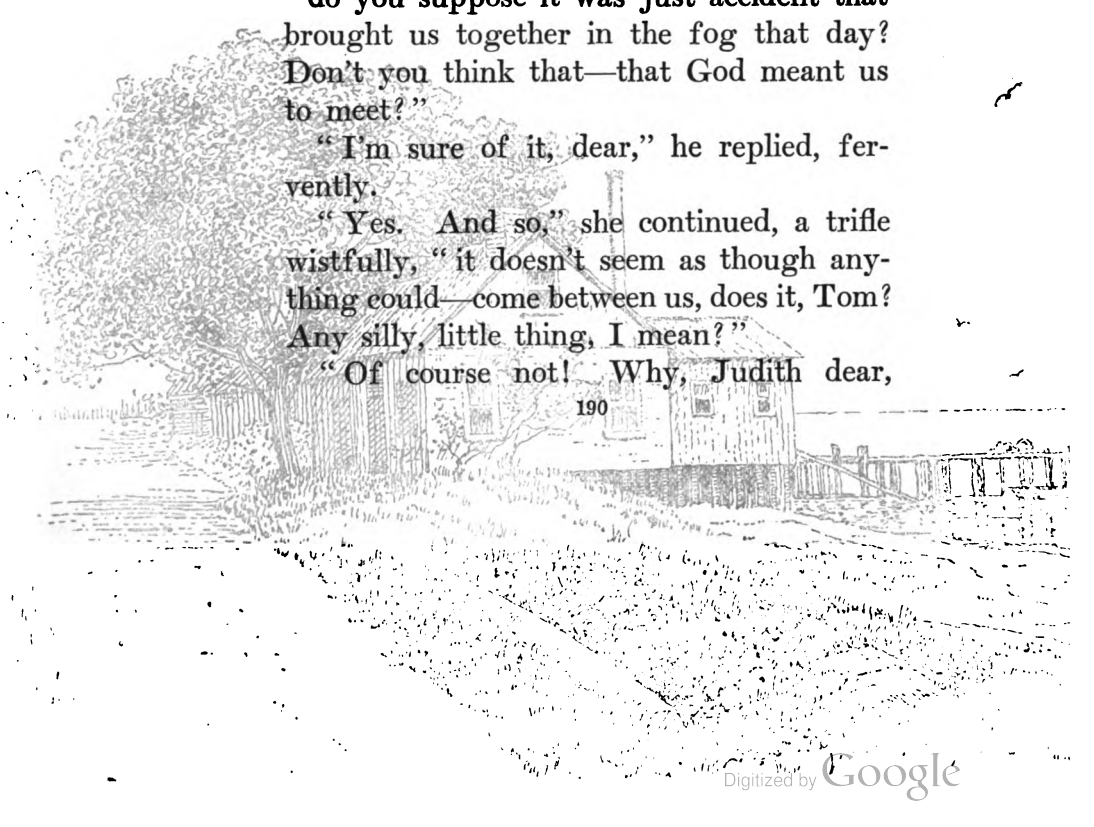
"Tom," she said, after a moment's silence, "do you suppose it was just accident that brought us together in the fog that day? Don't you think that—that God meant us to meet?"

"I'm sure of it, dear," he replied, fervently.

"Yes. And so," she continued, a trifle wistfully, "it doesn't seem as though anything could—come between us, does it, Tom? Any silly, little thing, I mean?"

"Of course not! Why, Judith dear,





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what do you mean? What is troubling you, sweetheart?"

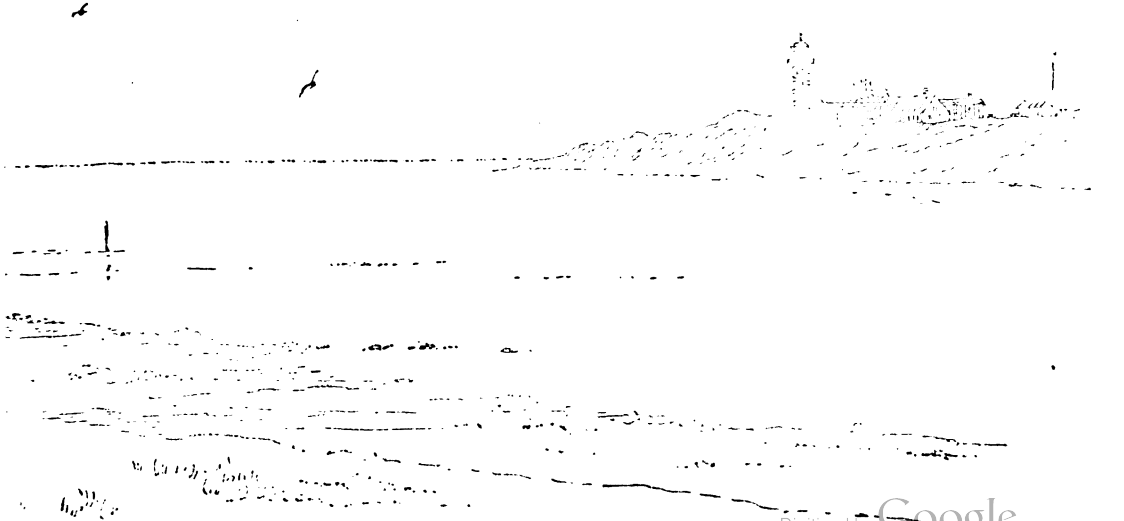
"Just—just thoughts. The fog out there looks so—so kind of cold and—cruel, Tom."

"Not to me," he said, heartily. "I shall always love the fog, Judith, since it brought you to me, you, my Lady of the Fog."

"'My Lady of the Fog'!" she murmured. "That's sweet, dear."

She nestled up to him and sighed as his arms folded about her.

"My Lady of the Fog," he echoed, softly.



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## XIII.

It was very still up here in the light tower. Only the toll of the bell reached them. The fog still held, gray, heavy, impenetrable. The curtains at the windows were dropped and the little round room was filled with a soft, shadowless radiance. The great lantern stared at them with its shining lenses and the polished brass gleamed wanly in the weak light. Judith was seated in the single camp-stool that the place afforded, and Tom was at her feet on the top of the spiral iron stairway, his hand lying on hers. Dinner was over and Judith thought regretfully that already the happy day was half gone. She wondered if ever such another would come to her. She feared that no one's life could hold more than one such day. Since she had followed Tom up the dizzy stairs she had been rather silent and depressed. And now he had taxed her with it, and the time had come.

"I am wondering, Tom," she said, clasp-

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ing the hand in her lap very tightly, "how much you care for me. Remember, dear, that you've only known me a few days, and it doesn't seem possible that in such a short time you could grow to—to care an awful lot."

"But I do—an awful lot, dear. So much that I couldn't any more do without you now than—than I could do without breath in my body, Judith."

"And, of course, it must be *me* you love, Tom, just me, Judith, and not—not anything about me, for you know nothing about me, do you?"

"Not much," he laughed, contentedly. "And so it's 'just you, Judith'!"

"Yes. But, Tom, how *much* do you care? I mean is—is there anything you can think of could come between us?"

"That's a queer question," he answered, frowning up at her. "Why do you ask such things, dear?"

"Because I want an answer," she replied, gravely.

"Then, dear, I can think of nothing that



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could come between us—nothing, that is, that could keep me from loving you."

"Then there might be something that would—would keep us apart?" she faltered.

"Judith!" he cried. "What are you trying to say? Are you trying to frighten me?"

"No, no, I'm not. But what did you mean——"

"Why, there might be something that would keep us apart, I suppose, dear. If you were married, or—well, I guess that's the only thing could do it."

She gave a sigh of relief.

"And that is all?" she asked. "If I was very poor, Tom, frightfully poor?"

"Foolish Judith! As though that could matter!"

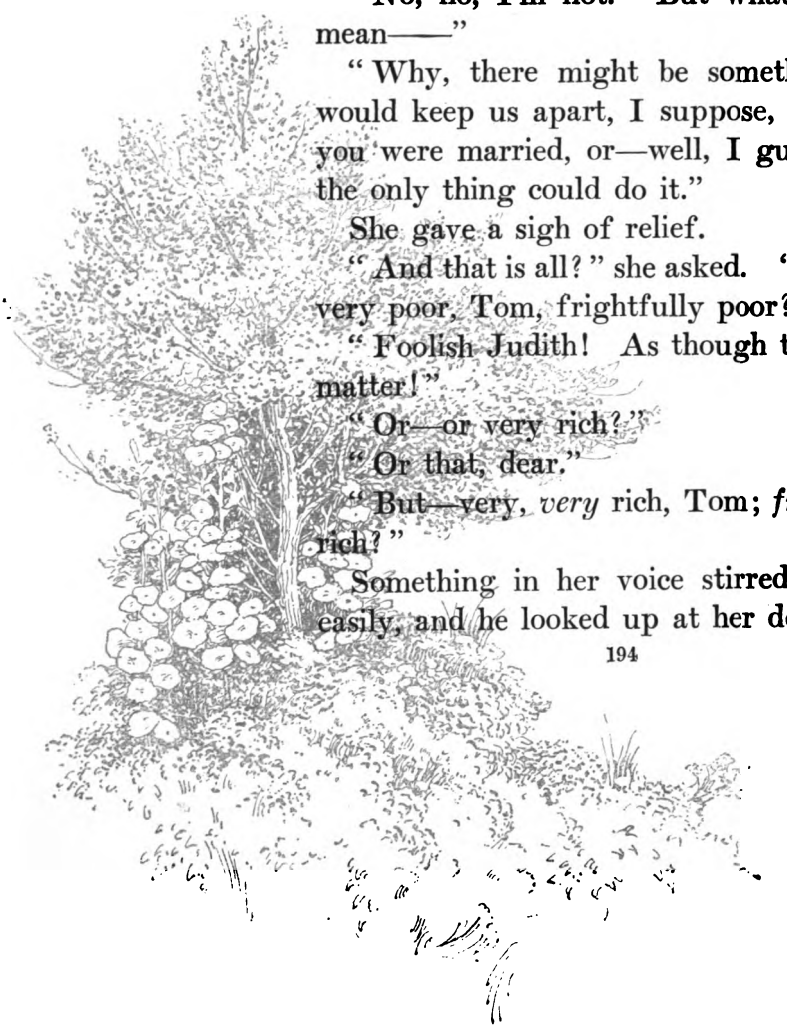
"Or—or very rich?"

"Or that, dear."

"But—very, *very* rich, Tom; ***frightfully*** rich?"

Something in her voice stirred him uneasily, and he looked up at her doubtfully.





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"That's a strange question, dear," he said, soberly. "What do you mean?"

"Supposing—supposing I was as rich as—as Judith Sypher, Tom?"

"Well, but you're not, are you? Why suppose anything of the sort?"

But something in her look brought him stumbling to his feet.

"Judith!" he gasped. For a long moment there was silence in the little chamber. Then, "My God," he groaned, "what a fool I've been!"

"Tom," she said, faintly.

"You're not—you're not Judy Sypher?" he asked, hoarsely, imploringly. She nodded her head.

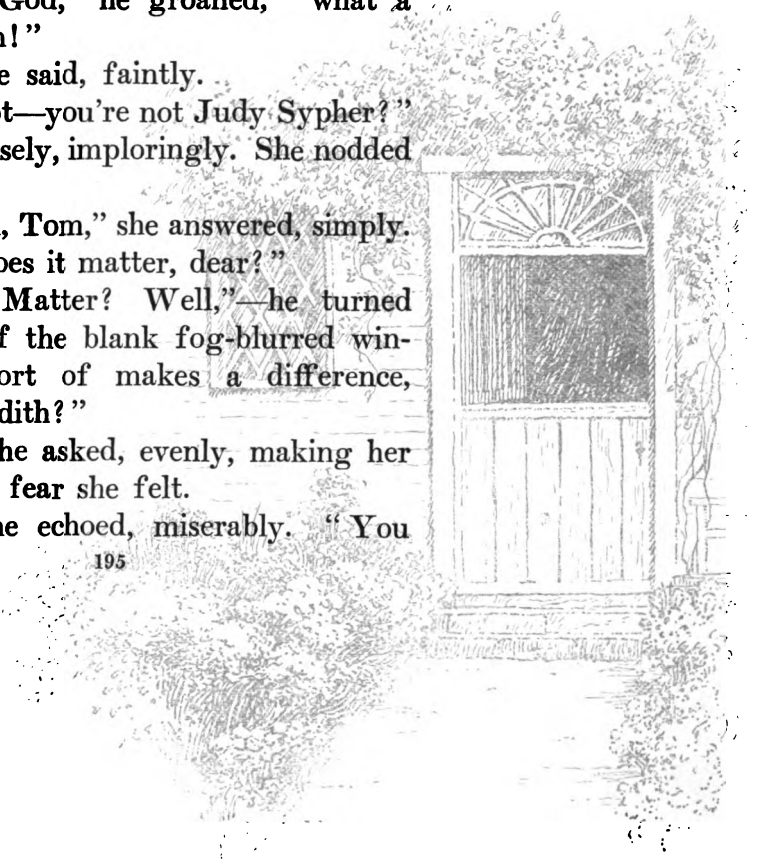
"Yes, I am, Tom," she answered, simply. "But what does it matter, dear?"

"Matter! Matter? Well,"—he turned toward one of the blank fog-blurred windows,—"it sort of makes a difference, doesn't it, Judith?"

"Why?" she asked, evenly, making her voice hide the fear she felt.

"Why?" he echoed, miserably. "You





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know why, dear! Good Lord, what a joke on me!"

"Tom!"

"Why did you let me do this?" he asked, bitterly, turning toward her.

"Did you give me much choice, Tom?" she asked, gently.

He groaned again and turned again to the fog.

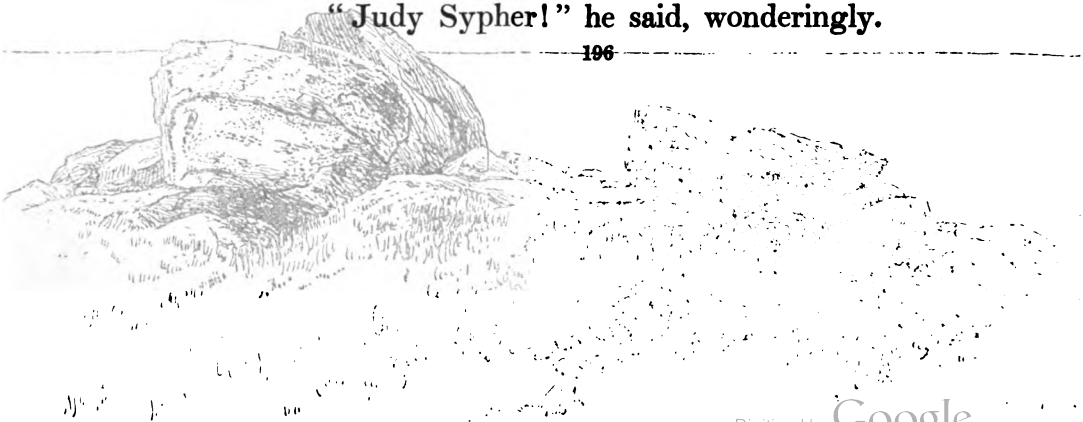
"I beg your pardon, Judith," he muttered. "It was my own fault, not yours. And yet—you might have told me—before."

"No," she said, decisively. "At first it didn't matter, Tom. It meant nothing to you who I was. Afterwards, when—when it did matter, why, don't you see, dear, it was too late? I cared for you then, and I was afraid I'd lose you. You men fight for what you love, don't you? Well, I was fighting, too, Tom. Was it unmaidenly? Perhaps; I don't know. I don't seem to care," she added, thoughtfully.

He had turned and was looking hungrily down at her bent head.

"Judy Sypher!" he said, wonderingly.





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HE HAD TURNED AND WAS LOOKING HUNGRILY DOWN AT HER BENT HEAD

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"Need we let it matter, Tom?" she asked.

"We can't help it, I'm afraid," he replied, settling his shoulders as though to face it more bravely.

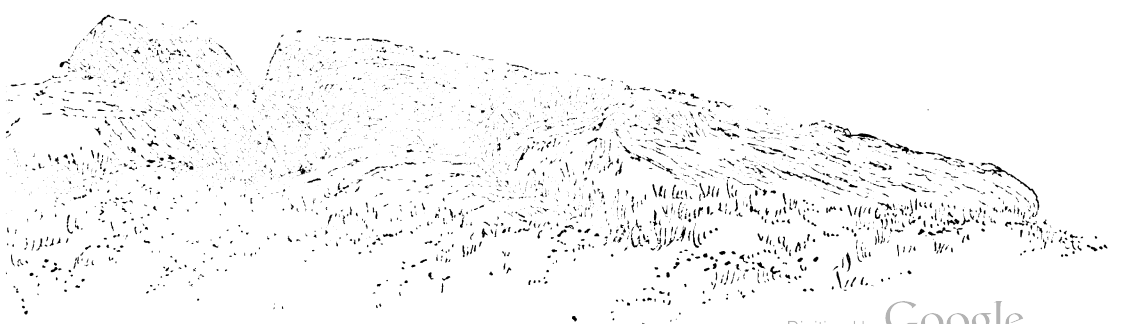
"Tom, don't say that!" she begged, with a sob. "You can't throw me aside now, dear, don't you see? You—you've kissed me, Tom. Your kiss was the very first, dear. Can't you see what that means—to me? Nothing would ever be quite the same, dear; you've taken something"—she put her hand over her heart as though to press back the pain—"something, Tom, that you can't give back to me, ever. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"Judith! For God's sake!" he implored. "Don't make it any harder for me! Do you think I find it easy?"

"Then, *why,* Tom?" she asked, with a little wan smile.

"Because—because I can't do it, Judith!" he said, wildly. "Great Heavens, think what they'd say! Tom Randall, a beggar, marrying Judy Sypher, the richest girl in the country! For her money, of





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course, what else? And you! Throwing yourself away on one of your workmen; for that's what I am, Judith, one of your employees! Good Lord, what a morsel for the papers!"

"I'll give it away, Tom, the money, all of it! I'll throw it away, dear!"

"You can't," he said, gloomily.

"No," she said, helplessly, "I can't."

There was silence for a moment, during which the fog-bell tolled its melancholy message. Then,

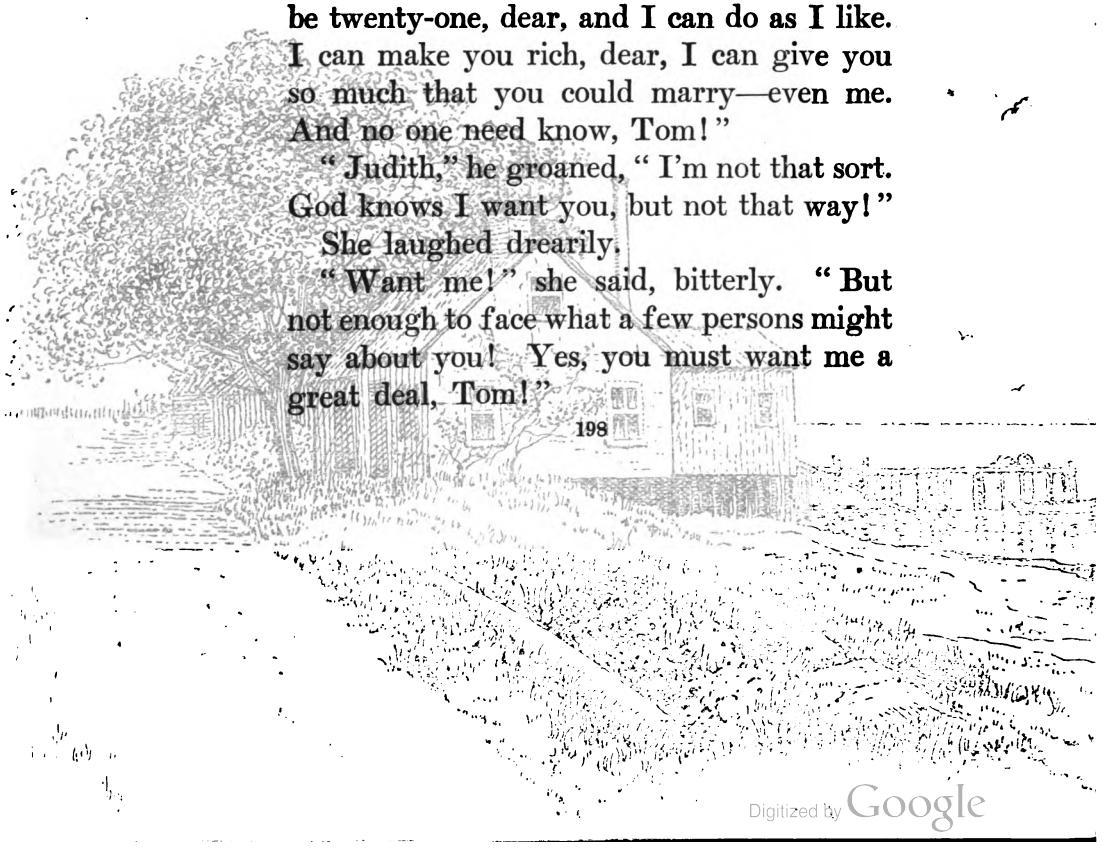
"Tom," she said, eagerly, "in a few months I shall be my own mistress; I shall be twenty-one, dear, and I can do as I like. I can make you rich, dear, I can give you so much that you could marry—even me. And no one need know, Tom!"

"Judith," he groaned, "I'm not that sort. God knows I want you, but not that way!"

She laughed drearily.

"Want me!" she said, bitterly. "But not enough to face what a few persons might say about you! Yes, you must want me a great deal, Tom!"





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"Don't!" he begged, miserably. "I can't stand this!" He turned desperately. "I must have room, air! I—I want to breathe! Come down out of this devilish place!" He plunged down the winding stairway, leaving her alone there in the eerie white silence. For a moment she sat on motionless. Then, with sudden determination, she leaped to her feet and sped hurriedly after him down the clanging steps. She opened the door from the passage and the fog rolled in upon her; her face felt as though a great soft sponge had been pressed against it. Leaning there, she peered about her into the gray void.

"Tom!" she called.

He answered from near at hand, and she went toward the sound of his voice across the grass-grown ledge until she found him at the base of the lighthouse.

"Tom," she said, then, "you mustn't decide anything now. You mustn't! Say you won't! Think what it may mean to—to both of us. Go away and come back in the morning, dear, when the fog has gone."

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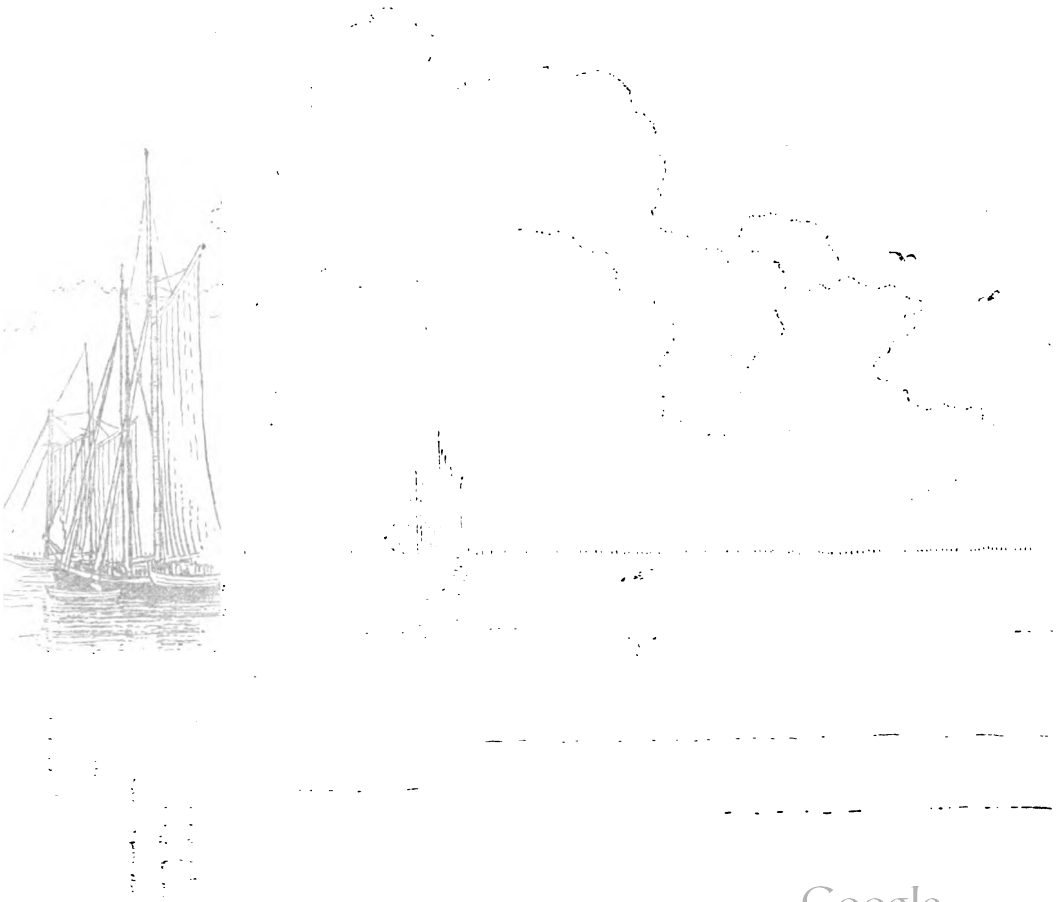
It's the fog that's making us unhappy, Tom; I hate it! I want the sunlight again; one can see clearly in the sunlight. Will you wait, Tom? Will you do this for me?"

"Yes," he answered, quite calmly. "I'll wait—for the sunlight."

He took her hands in his, looked for an instant into her pleading eyes, and turned away into the mist.



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## XIV.

"GONE, you say?" exclaimed Captain George, bringing his feet down from the chair seat to the floor with a crash. "Jumpin' Jupiter, ma'am, he can't find his way back in this fog! I thought he was settled to stay until it cleared?"

"He found it necessary to return to the village," answered Judith, quietly. "You don't think there's any danger, Captain?"

"Danger? No, ma'am, not 's long as he stays in his boat. But I cal'late he'll find it a long pull across. After the way he lost himself last night, I should think he'd be willin' to keep out o' fogs!"

"I know. Doubtless, though, it was necessary for him to return. Will you send Janet to me, Mrs. Poggs, when she comes in?"

"I'll call her now, Miss," replied Mrs. Poggs, as Judith closed the door and climbed the stairs. Presently, when Janet had followed her mistress and Mrs. Poggs



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had taken up her knitting again, the Captain took his pipe from his mouth and looked from his wife to Mister Dixon questioningly.

"Looks to me," he said, "like there'd been a squall. I cal'late this feller Randall's got everything close-hauled and is running for harbor."

"Nonsense," said his wife. "They're just all wrapped up in each other, George."

"Maybe they *was*," chuckled the Captain, "but I cal'late the wrappin's come off. What say, Dixon?"

"Squall 's what I make it, Captain," replied Mister Dixon, dutifully. Mrs. Poggs sniffed.

"You men ain't got any more appreciation for romance than—than that collie dog," she said, pityingly. "All you care for is plenty of victuals and too much tobacco."

"Cal'late she's talkin' about you, Dixon," chuckled the Captain. Mister Dixon grinned broadly.

"It's just beautiful to see the way them



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young folks are actin' toward each other," she went on. "It's better 'n a book. For my part, spite of all her money, I don't believe she'll ever find a nicer young man, not if she was to live for a hundred years."

"Like enough," responded the Captain, "but just you remember, Marthy, that that young feller's a strange craft in these waters and don't carry any papers; leastwise he ain't shown 'em to me if he does."

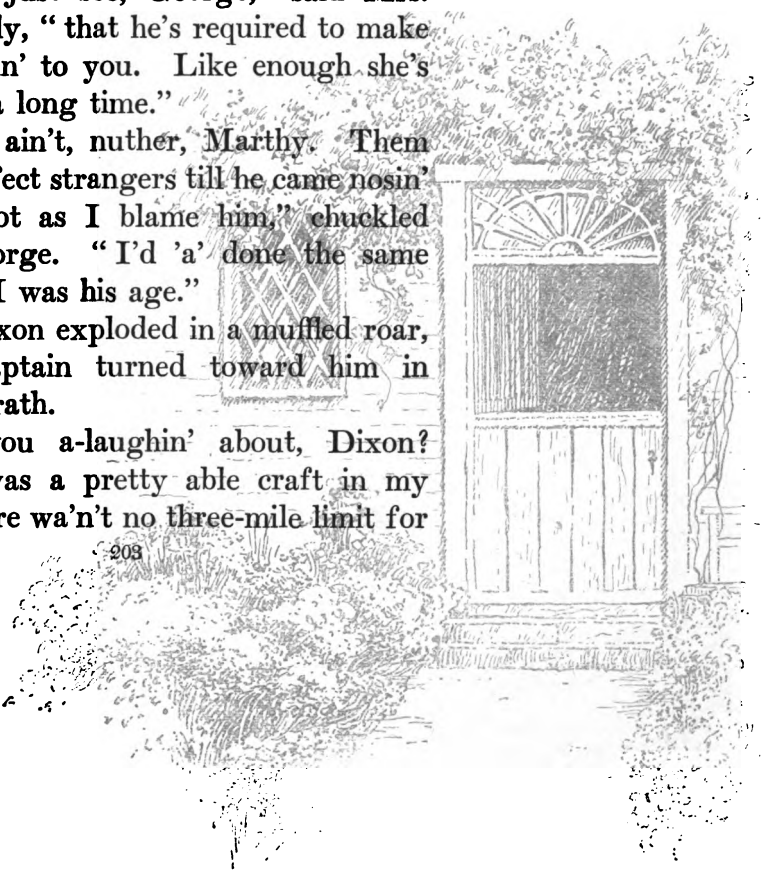
"I don't just see, George," said Mrs. Poggs, calmly, "that he's required to make any accountin' to you. Like enough she's known him a long time."

"No, she ain't, nuther, Marthy. Them two was perfect strangers till he came nosin' in here. Not as I blame him," chuckled Captain George. "I'd 'a' done the same thing when I was his age."

Mister Dixon exploded in a muffled roar, and the Captain turned toward him in simulated wrath.

"What you a-laughin' about, Dixon? Cal'late I was a pretty able craft in my time, an' there wa'n't no three-mile limit for





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me when it come to ladies. Nice one you are to laugh at such things, Dixon. Why, jumpin' Jupiter, man, at your age I'd been engaged to be married eight times!" The Captain winked reassuringly at his wife. "An' what are you doin' for your country, Dixon? Nary thing, my boy! You been a-courtin' of that Tucker girl for nigh on three years and she don't know yet whether you're comin' about or standin' off!"

"Ain't nuther," growled Mister Dixon, indignantly. "'Tain't but two years, an' you know it."

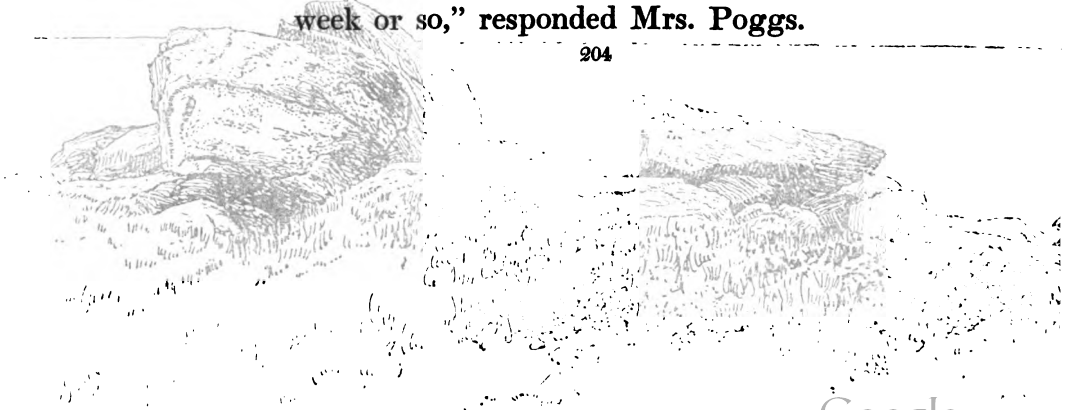
"Well, I wouldn't be so all-fired proud of it," answered the Captain. "Why don't you signal, man? Want to wait till you're both so water-logged you can't make port?"

There was only an exasperated grunt from Mister Dixon, and the Captain gave him up. Pointing upward with the stem of his pipe, he said:

"I cal'late she'll be weighin' anchor pretty soon now, Marthy."

"Janet says she means to stay another week or so," responded Mrs. Poggs.





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"Want to know! Well, I'm pleased enough. Spite of all that money of hers, she's a nice, plain-spoken gal, ain't she?"

"Why shouldn't she be? You're always fetchin' up about her money, George. I suppose a girl can have money and be a lady, can't she?"

"Well, I cal'late she can, Marthy, but I've seen a heap that wa'n't. I've seen women folks that didn't own as much money as that gal spends on fal-de-lals, likely, that couldn't see me unless I trod on their toes! Seems as if po-sessin' money weakens the eyesight, Marthy."

"Janet says——"

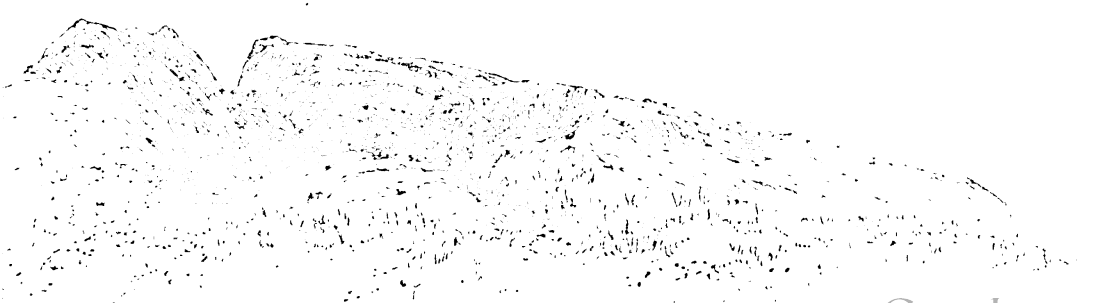
"Now look here, Marthy, that gal's name is Jennie when she's to home, no matter how Frenchified it is when she's in New York."

"Janet says Miss Judith's aunt will be terrible put out if she don't marry that foreigner," continued Mrs. Poggs, placidly.

"What's hinderin' her aunt from marryin' the foreigner?" chuckled her husband.

"If she was my daughter," pursued Mrs. Poggs, imperturbably, "I'd a lot rather see





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her married to a man like Mr. Randall than to one of those foreigners."

"So would Randall, I cal'late," said the Captain. "But I guess a Count's a Count, Marthy, an' when it comes to such things women are all alike. I don't set much store by foreigners myself; never did; can't understand their lingo, for one thing. I've tried pretty nigh all sorts; Swedes, dagoes, Portuguese, Frenchmen, niggers and English; an' I never see one could hold a candle to a Yankee on a wet deck. Course I never had any Counts when I was sailin'—leastwise, not as I knowed of, but I cal'late when the blood's the same Counts an' no-accounts are pretty much alike. Well, it's time to light up, Dixon."

Judith didn't come down to supper that night. Instead Janet took up a tray and Judith sipped her tea and nibbled at her toast beside the open window on the harbor side of the room. Her head ached frightfully. She had been thinking incessantly ever since she had reached her room. She had lain down on the bed for a while and

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had tried to go to sleep, but her thoughts had kept her open-eyed.

Presently she pushed the tray away and her gaze fell on a letter from her aunt received two days before and still unanswered. She decided that she would reply to it now; it might calm her mind. But for a long time after the pad was in her lap and the pen in her hand she sat motionless, staring out of the window. The fog was clearing away slowly, and now and then a star twinkled for a moment or a light sprang dimly into view only to be lost again. At last with a resolute sigh she began to write. . . .

" . . . I'm ready to come home now, dear, for I've quite decided. I shall not marry Count Salzstadt. This will, I know, be a disappointment to you, for ever since I came to you you have wanted me to make a 'grand marriage.' But, Auntie dear, I don't think I care for a grand marriage. I think I should prefer a happy one. I'm sorry. It seems ungrateful toward you, after all the planning you have done. But I can't do it, dear; that is quite settled.



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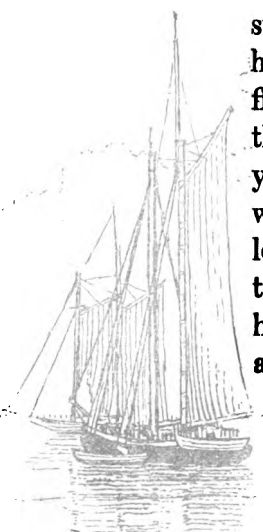
Perhaps I shall not marry at all. You wouldn't approve of that, I know, but it would be preferable to being miserable with someone I didn't care for, wouldn't it, dear? You have told me so often that I could respect Count Salzstadt, and that caring would come afterwards. But I'm afraid to risk it. Supposing the caring didn't come? Or supposing it did come—for someone else? That would be rather a mess, wouldn't it, dear? So you see, don't you? And you'll try to forgive me? . . . "

By the time she had finished her letter the fog was only a memory. Across the harbor the lights of Greenhaven shone bright and clear and in the blue-black sky countless stars flashed and sparkled. A west wind had arisen and she could hear the halyards flapping against the pole at the corner of the house. Somewhere over there where the yellow lights clustered was Tom. She wondered what he was thinking, doing, and longed for him intensely. He was in trouble and she wanted so much to comfort him. There had been times during the long afternoon when her cheeks had burned at





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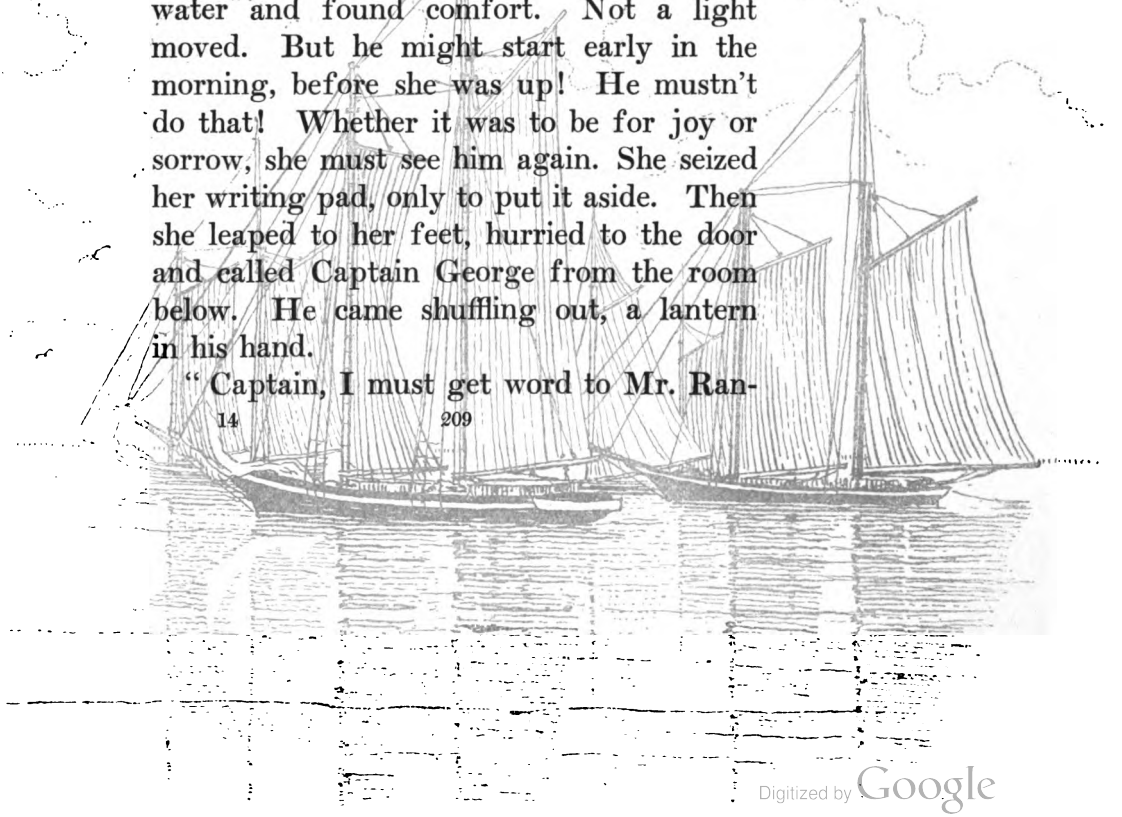
the recollection of things she had said to him, but now it didn't seem to matter. One's chances of happiness were not so many that one could afford to let them go without a struggle.

Suddenly, as she sat there looking across at the distant lights, a new and disquieting thought came to her. Supposing he didn't come in the morning! Supposing he went away without seeing her, with only a line of farewell! Oh, why hadn't she made him promise to come? Perhaps at this moment he was going by out there in the darkness, going out of her life! She stared over the water and found comfort. Not a light moved. But he might start early in the morning, before she was up! He mustn't do that! Whether it was to be for joy or sorrow, she must see him again. She seized her writing pad, only to put it aside. Then she leaped to her feet, hurried to the door and called Captain George from the room below. He came shuffling out, a lantern in his hand.

"Captain, I must get word to Mr. Ran-





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dall very early in the morning. He may be going away and—and there is something I want to say to him. Could you take a message to him?"

"Yes, ma'am, I cal'late that wouldn't be hard to do."

"How early?"

"Well, how early 's he goin', Miss?"

"I don't know, but I'm afraid he may be gone before——"

"Don't you worry, ma'am. I'll row over at five. That'll be plenty early enough to catch a city feller. These amachoor sailors ain't much on sunrises, ma'am. What'll I tell him?"

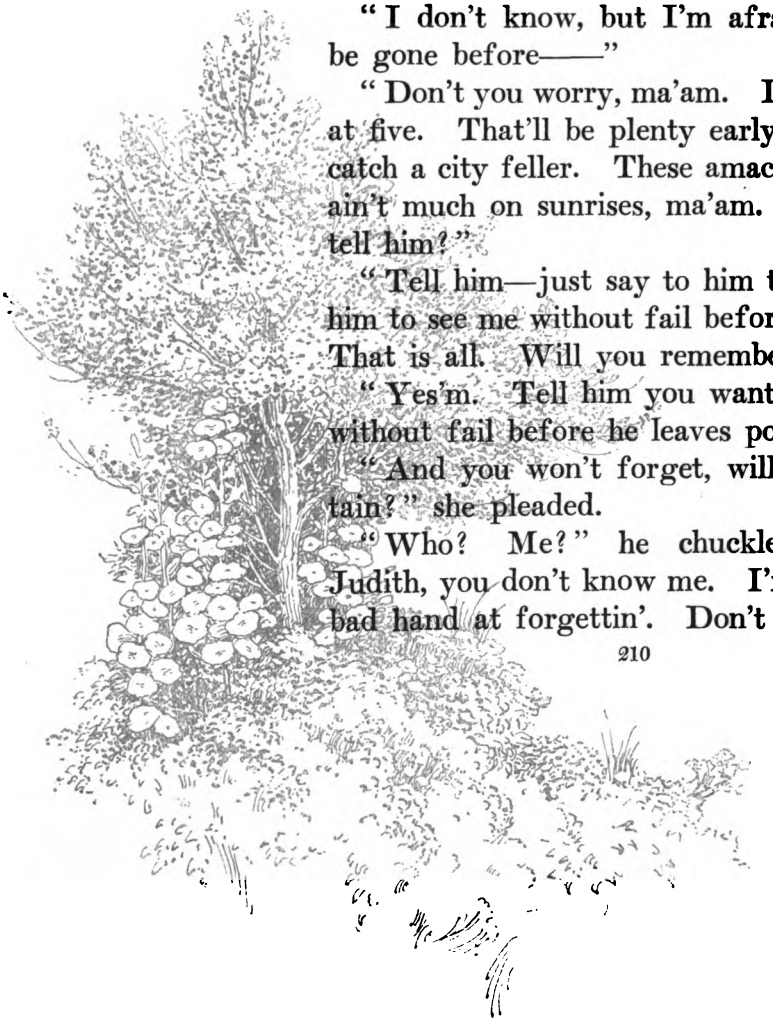
"Tell him—just say to him that I want him to see me without fail before he leaves. That is all. Will you remember that?"

"Yes'm. Tell him you want to see him without fail before he leaves port."

"And you won't forget, will you, Captain?" she pleaded.

"Who? Me?" he chuckled. "Miss Judith, you don't know me. I'm a mighty bad hand at forgettin'. Don't you worry,





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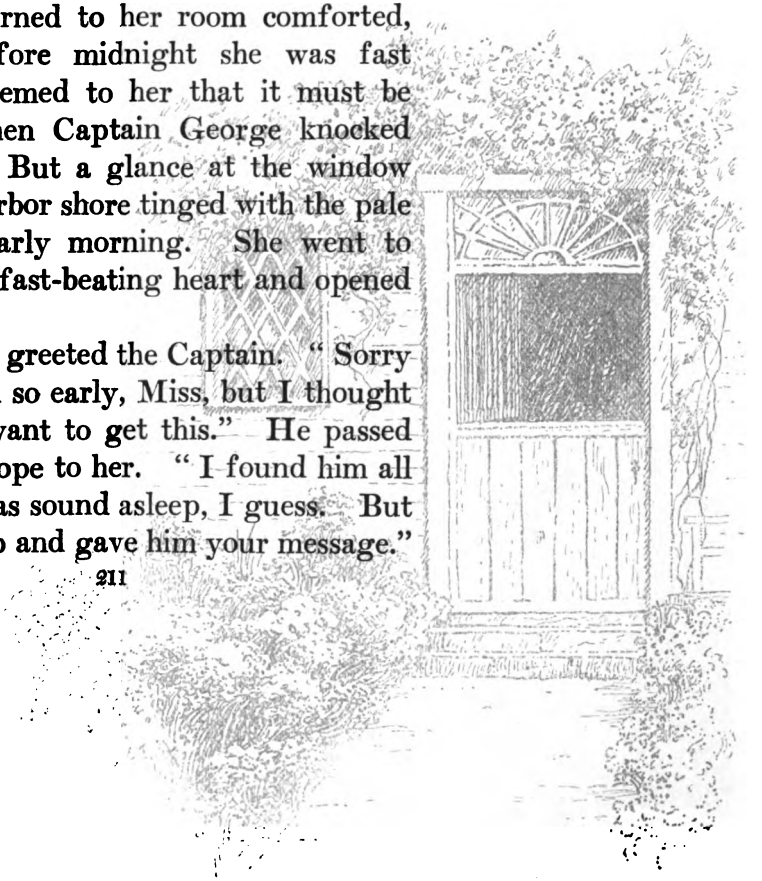
ma'am. He'll have that message before half-past five to-morrow mornin'. An' if he's got the sense I take it he's got he'll be over here before six!"

"Thank you, Captain, so much," she said, gratefully. "Good night. I see the fog has cleared off."

"Yes, Miss, there never was a fog could play sassy to a west wind. Good night, ma'am."

Judith returned to her room comforted, and long before midnight she was fast asleep. It seemed to her that it must be still night when Captain George knocked at her door. But a glance at the window showed the harbor shore tinged with the pale sunlight of early morning. She went to the door with fast-beating heart and opened it a little.

"Mornin'," greeted the Captain. "Sorry to disturb you so early, Miss, but I thought likely you'd want to get this." He passed a sealed envelope to her. "I found him all right. He was sound asleep, I guess. But I woke him up and gave him your message."





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"What did he say?" she whispered, anxiously.

"Well, he said a lot o' things that I don't just remember, Miss, but the substance of 'em seemed to be that he was mighty sorry an' couldn't come. He gave me that letter; said he was goin' to send it to you and would be obliged if I'd take it."

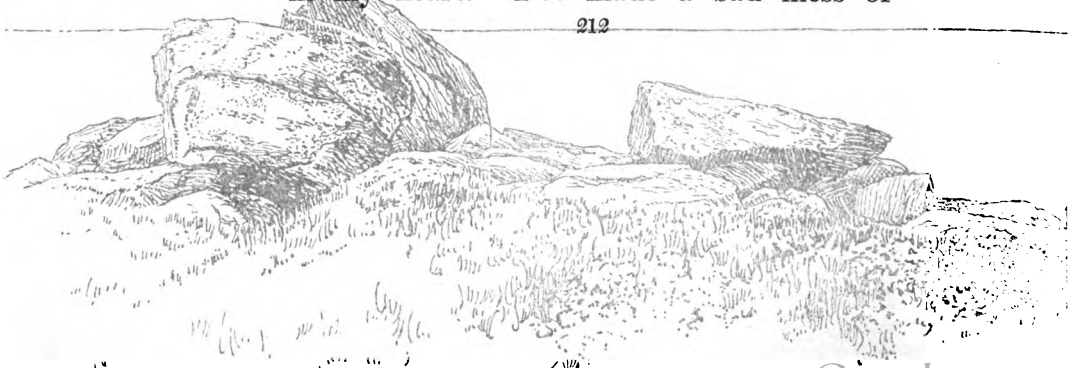
"He wouldn't come!" she exclaimed, with sinking heart.

"Well, *couldn't* was the word he used, Miss. He said he was goin' away rather early. I told him if he was goin' early," chuckled the Captain, "he'd ought to started an hour ago!"

"Wait, please," said Judith, "while I see—what he—says." She tore the envelope apart and read hurriedly the few lines within.

"I am going away," he had written, "because I mustn't see you again. If I did it would be no use, dear. There is only one right way and I am taking it. I can't write, dear. You will understand what is in my heart. I've made a bad mess of





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things. I can take my medicine, but it makes me wild to think that I've hurt you. If I could help things I'd jump overboard in a minute, but all I can do is to beg your forgiveness, Judith. For God's sake forget me, dear, and pray that He will let me forget you. No, don't do that. I don't want to forget you. Good-bye and God bless you and give you happiness. Tom."

She crushed the letter in her hand and went swiftly to the window. The *Vagrant* was not in sight. There was still time.

"Captain, you must help me," she half sobbed. "He mustn't go until I've seen him. I—I—oh, you understand, don't you?"

"Yes'm, I cal'late I do," answered the Captain, huskily. "And all you've got to do is tell me what way I can help you, Miss."

"Thank you," she murmured, gratefully. "Let me think. How soon do you think he meant to start, Captain?"

"Well, I left him gettin' into his trou—into his clothes, ma'am. Bein' a pretty level-headed sort, not takin' his recent ac-

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tions in consideration, I cal'late he won't weigh anchor before he's had his breakfast. Maybe that would mean half an hour all told, though I must say he didn't look like he had a very powerful appetite this mornin', Miss."

"Then you must go down to the landing and watch while I dress. And you must have the boat all ready, Captain. If you see the *Vagrant* coming out—you'd know her, wouldn't you?" she asked, anxiously.

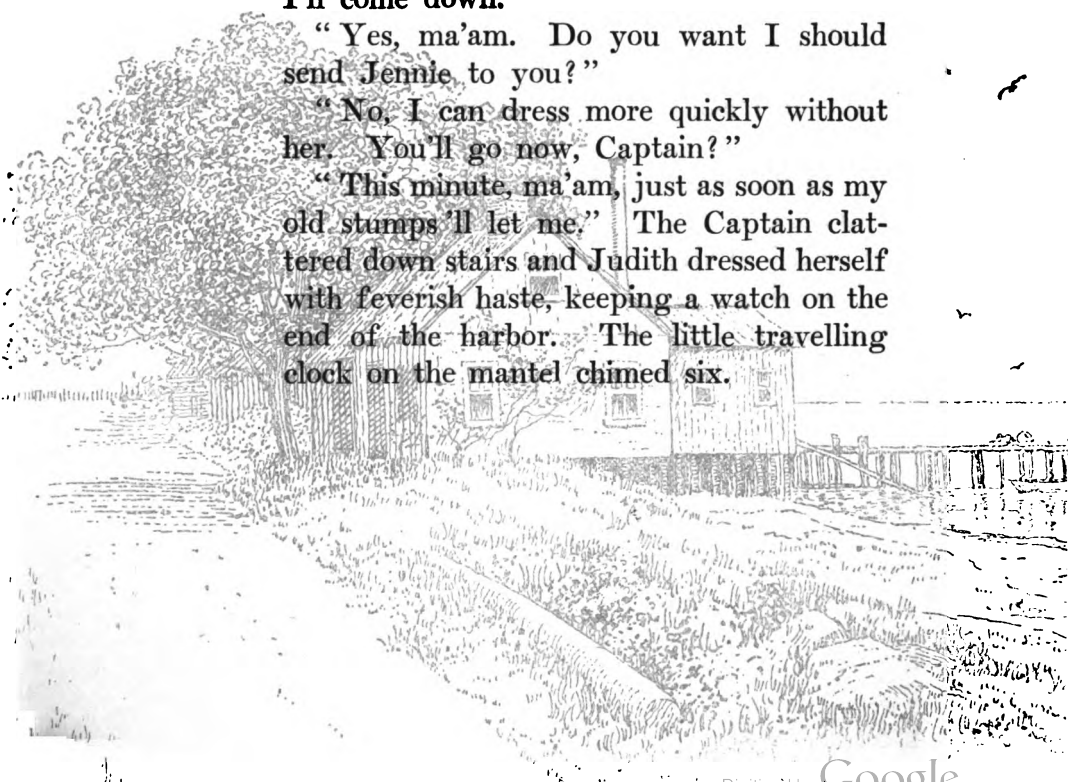
"The instant I set eyes on her, ma'am."

"Then if you see her you must come and tell me at once. As soon as I'm dressed I'll come down."

"Yes, ma'am. Do you want I should send Jennie to you?"

"No, I can dress more quickly without her. You'll go now, Captain?"

"This minute, ma'am, just as soon as my old stumps 'll let me." The Captain clattered down stairs and Judith dressed herself with feverish haste, keeping a watch on the end of the harbor. The little travelling clock on the mantel chimed six.



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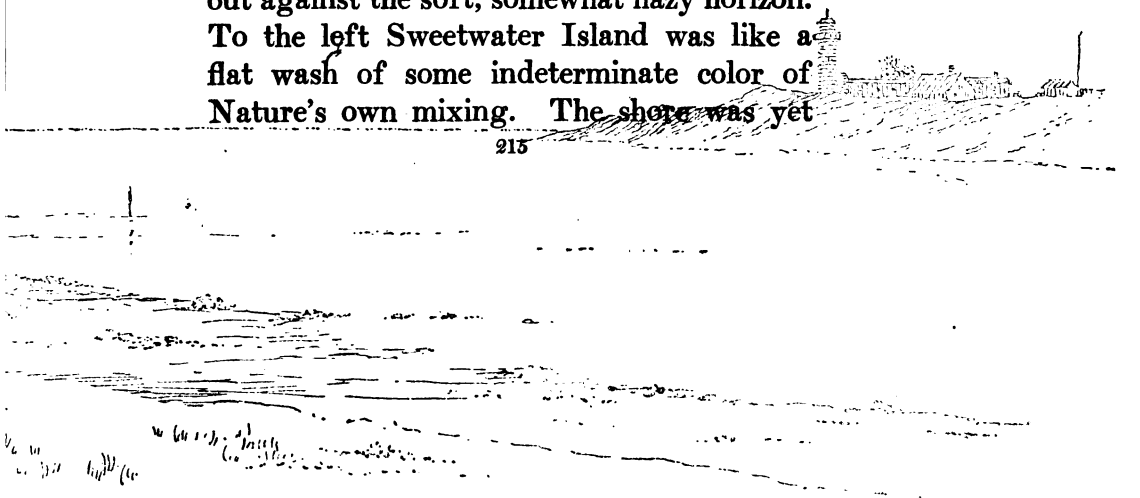
## XV.

THE *Vagrant's* anchor came up slowly, as though loath to leave its bed at such an unhallowed hour, and the ebbing tide swung the launch's head around until it faced the open. Tom took the wheel and the wharves began to slip away beside him. The gilded hands of the town-hall clock pointed to twenty minutes after six, the early sunlight glinting on them radiantly. Behind the tower the trees quivered gently in the little breeze that blew along the hill. It promised to be a hot day, but as yet the moist chill of morning hung in the air and the mirror-like pools of dew that lay on the cabin roof were cold against the hand. The harbor was a placid expanse of blue pricked out with dazzling splashes and pin-points of gold. To the right the wooded shore stood boldly out against the soft, somewhat hazy horizon. To the left Sweetwater Island was like a flat wash of some indeterminate color of Nature's own mixing. The shore was yet





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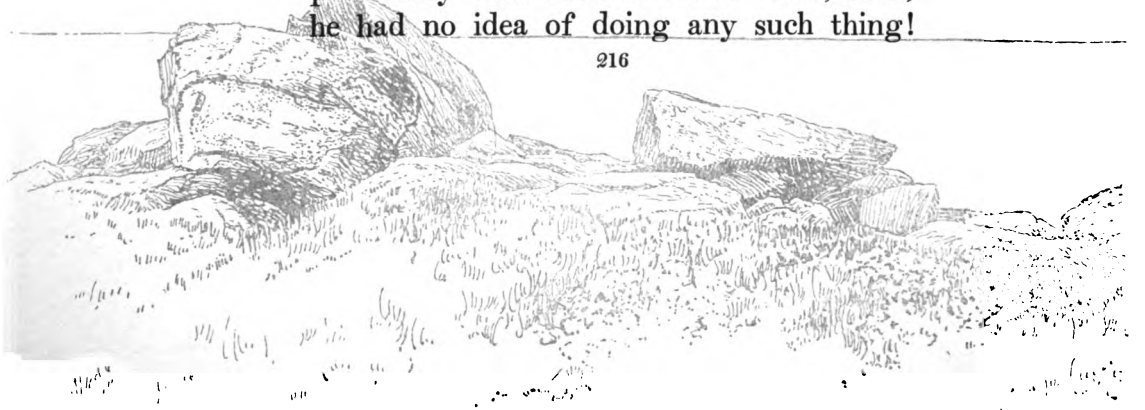
in shadow and only the lighthouse and the buildings nestling at its foot showed detail. The white tower gleamed palely yellow in the sunlight.

Tom, his teeth clinched over the stem of his empty pipe, looked neither to right nor left. He had laid a straight course for the end of Piper's Reef, and if he held to it he would pass Sweetwater Island a half-mile away to starboard. And he meant to hold to it. He had made his choice, and that choice was flight. And he realized that in running away the straight road was the quickest.

For all of that, though, it was hard to resist the aching desire to take a nearer view of the island. At this time of morning no one, save the Captain or Mr. Dixon, would see him, for it never occurred to him that the Captain would awaken Judith to deliver the note to her. He was almost opposite the hotel now, and if he was to sail nearer the island there was no time to lose; if he went much farther he would have to practically turn back to do it. But, then, he had no idea of doing any such thing!





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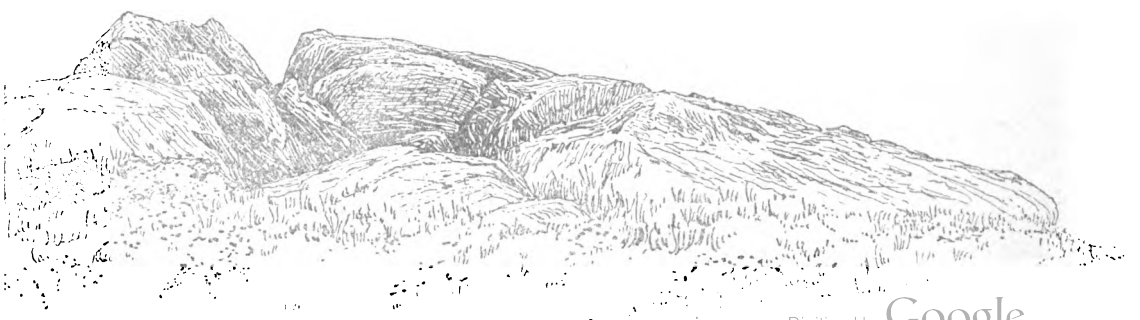
Yonder was the black edge of Piper's Reef, and the *Vagrant's* nose was pointed directly toward it. Well, in just another minute it would be too late to approach the island with any semblance of unconcern. Even now he would have to turn at a broad angle from his present course. Yes, but now it wasn't too late; in another moment it would be! With a groan of angry contempt for his own weakness, Tom turned the wheel quickly and the *Vagrant's* bow swung around to starboard.

For the first time Tom allowed himself a full look at the island. There was the light where yesterday—just yesterday!—they had sat together, his hand nestled in her two warm little palms. There were the cottage and the window of her room where she lay asleep. He groaned again, this time for very self-pity and misery. The sunlight on the crinkled water ahead dazzled his eyes a little, but he was almost certain that no one was in sight on the island. He would turn again in a minute and bear off. Already he wished that he had not come.





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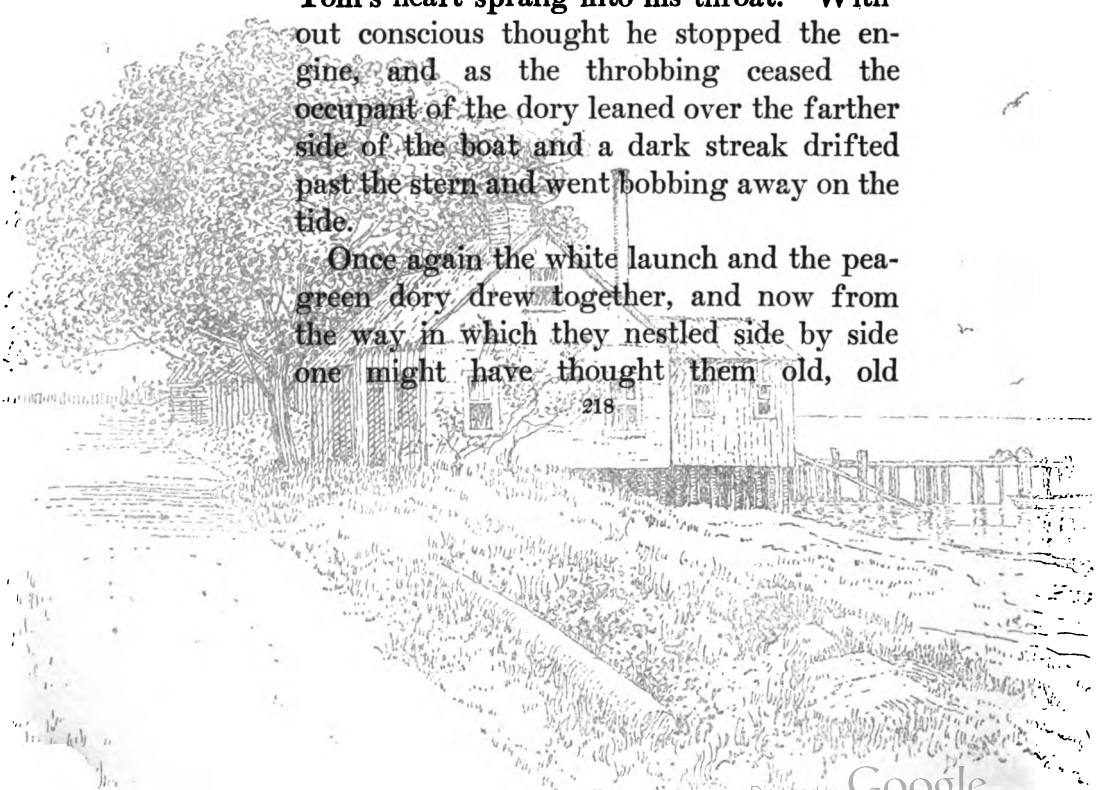
Why hadn't he kept on his course and saved himself all this fresh agony and torment?

Suddenly an uncertain shape wavered before him in the path of the sunlight, a dark shape that, as his hand tugged at the wheel, took the form of a dory. He swung the launch further to port and gave a warning blast on the shrill whistle. But the dory went on, straight toward the launch's course. Was the man a fool? growled Tom. Did he want to get smashed into? He turned further out and slowed the engine, and then the dory was out of the sunlight path, clear against the blue of the water, and Tom's heart sprang into his throat. Without conscious thought he stopped the engine, and as the throbbing ceased the occupant of the dory leaned over the farther side of the boat and a dark streak drifted past the stern and went bobbing away on the tide.

Once again the white launch and the pea-green dory drew together, and now from the way in which they nestled side by side one might have thought them old, old





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WITH A LITTLE SOB SHE CREPT TOWARD HIM

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friends. Tom knelt at the side of the launch, one hand on the dory's gunwale, all the longing and despair of his heart showing in his face. Judith, seated with her hands clasped loosely in her lap, looked back at him with a little composed smile on her pale face.

"Judith," he cried, bitterly, "why have you done this? It was cruel of you, cruel!"

"I wanted to say good-bye to you," she answered, tranquilly. "Do you mind my doing that, Tom?"

"'Good-bye!'" he exclaimed, miserably. "'Good-bye!' How am I to say it—now?"

"I don't know," she murmured, with a helpless shake of her head.

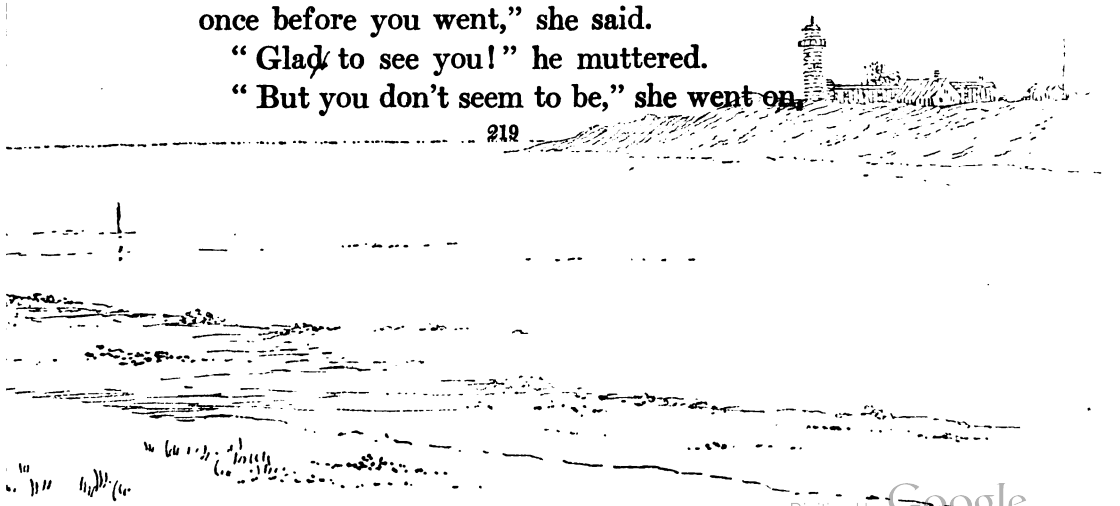
"Judith, Judith, you shouldn't have done it!" he said, brokenly. She smiled wistfully.

"I thought you'd be glad to see me just once before you went," she said.

"Glad to see you!" he muttered.

"But you don't seem to be," she went on,





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plaintively, "and so—so—I suppose I'd better be going, hadn't I?"

There was a moment of silence. Only their eyes spoke. Then,

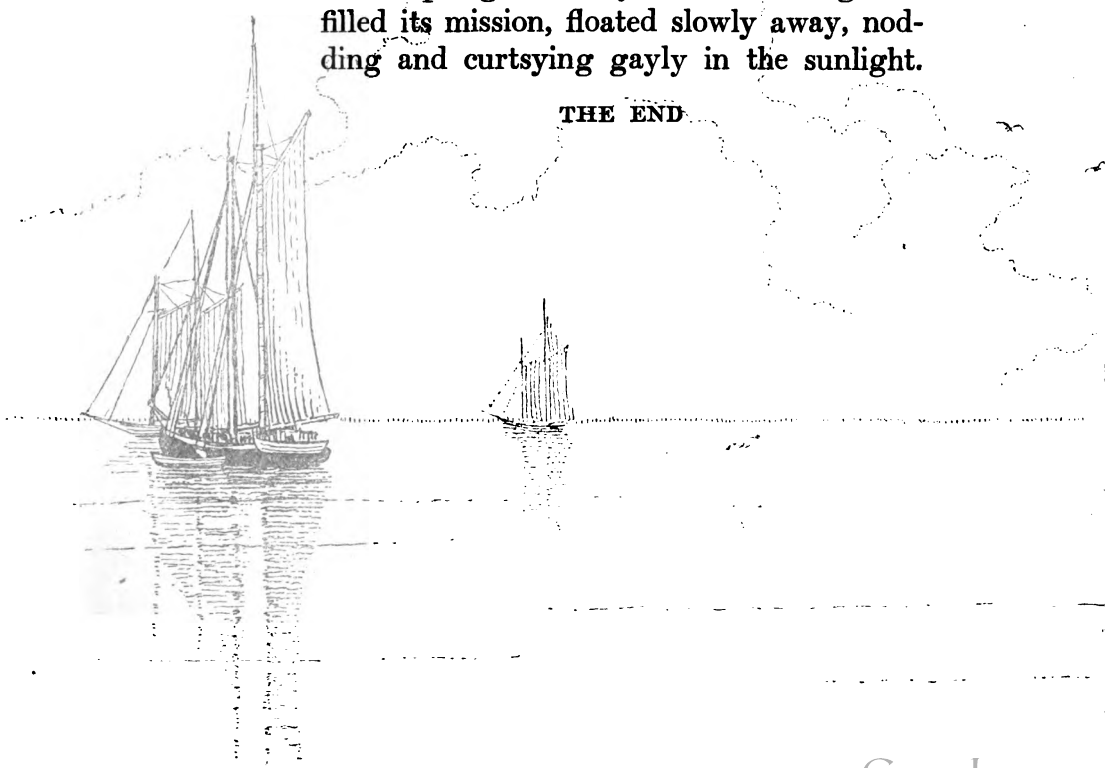
"Judith! Judith!" he cried, hoarsely. "Right or wrong, I can't let you go now!"

With a little sob she crept toward him and found herself lifted up into his arms and felt his kisses on her mouth and cheeks and closed eyelids. She looked up at him, a little whimsical smile trembling at her lips.

"I didn't see just how you could, Tom, dear," she whispered, "because, you see, I—I lost one of my oars!"

The pea-green dory, as one having fulfilled its mission, floated slowly away, nodding and curtsying gayly in the sunlight.

THE END



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